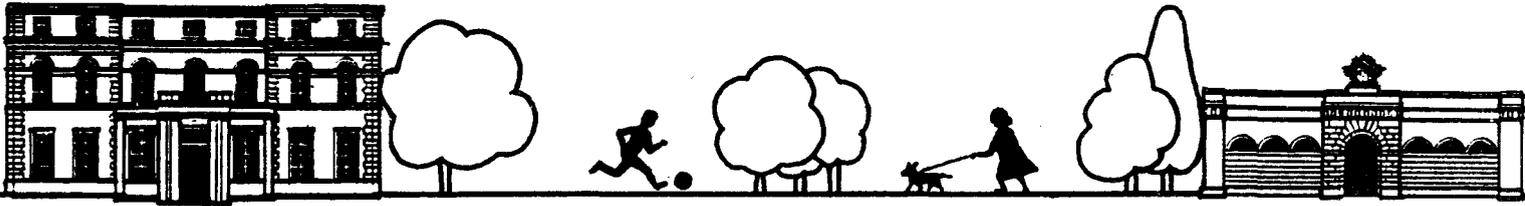


No.13
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NEWSLETTER



Friends' Café Opens 1st April!

Hang on to your hats - we are going to be running the cafes in the Park! The Joint Committee have accepted our offer to take over the two cafes, to develop the service and to use the profits for the improvement of the Park and the Museum. We all feel very strongly that the quality of its catering is just as important as everything else in the Park and we are determined to make this venture a success.

This has already involved a lot of hard work, and there is more to come. Firstly, on the advice of the Charity Commissioners, we are setting up a limited liability company to run the catering business. The shares in this company will be held by Trustees on behalf of the Friends of Gunnersbury Park and Museum, and any profits will be covenanted to the Friends for the Park and Museum. This method will ensure that no risk or liability will fall upon the general membership of the Friends. The provisional name of the company is 'Gunnersbury Enterprises Ltd' and we are being advised on all this by the solicitor at the Hounslow Law Centre, Nick Scudamore, who was responsible for preparing the Constitution of the Friends for the approval of the Charity Commissioners.

Secondly, we have invited a professional caterer (and one of our members), Jennifer Pates, to advise us on the running of the cafes. She has prepared figures (which we have submitted to the Joint Committee) to show that, given a reasonable level of investment we can create an income from the sales of ice cream, beverages, food and confectionary which would cover the cost of staffing it in the first year. Of course, we have plans for developing this service in the second and subsequent years but we are always interested to have suggestions from our members on this. Do you have a vision of what good park catering could be? Have you been impressed by a cafe in another park which we should know about?

Thirdly, labour. The present state of both cafe buildings (the Pavilion Cafe is the large one by the Round Pond, the Coronation Chalet is the small one near the Farm Changing Rooms) is rather poor. Some essential public health work and renovation is being undertaken by the Joint Committee but we are going to have to take responsibility for decorating the interior of the Pavilion Cafe before we open on 1st April. This is a large job and we have got to do it - if you can't come yourself, send a friend! (Details later in this Newsletter.)

Fourthly, money. We are not carrying on the existing cafe operation. We are starting afresh with new equipment. Much of the existing equipment in the cafe is unsuitable or unusable. Catering equipment is expensive and we are trying to keep our

Continued overleaf.

Meeting in the Café ~ 3rd March

We are holding an informal meeting in the Pavilion Cafe (by the Round Pond) at 3.00 on Sunday March 3rd in order to discuss our plans and to hear your views. We will not be asking for donations or volunteers at this meeting, so please don't stay away if you cannot offer that practical help - your ideas and enthusiasm will be very welcome. We will have a steward outside wearing a 'Frog' badge to show you the way in. Ironically, the one thing we cannot offer you is a cup of tea!

costs down by buying good reconditioned items or by leasing for three years. The sort of items we need are chest freezers, an oven with a circulating fan, a microwave oven, an upright chiller ('fridge), a chilled food display cabinet, a hot food display cabinet, a hot water boiler and all the light equipment - china, glassware, table cloths and so on - that will make the place look smart and clean.

We are going to lend the new company £1000 from the Friends' account, we will be borrowing money from the bank on the personal guarantee of members of the Committee, and we have already been promised several hundred pounds by enthusiastic Friends. Currently there are over 500 Friends of Gunnersbury Park; to get this cafe going we are going to need at least an additional £1000. That is either £2 each, £5 from 200 members, £10 from 100 members or £25 from 40! We would obviously prefer donations, but if anybody wishes to make a loan to be repaid when funds allow we would be happy to consider it. However it comes we need it urgently. This is the first time we have asked our members for donations and the 'cause' is clearly a worthwhile one. We all hope that you will support this project. Please send cheques (payable to Friends of Gunnersbury Park and Museum) to the Treasurer, Joyce Prince, 245 Popes Lane, W.5.

Winter in the Park

by Mike Rowan

'Never work with children or animals' is a legendary phrase amongst those of the acting profession, and the longer I spend in Gunnersbury Park, the more convinced I am that this could also be the cry of the outraged gardener. When someone uses the word 'vandal' what images are conjured up? Do you visualise adolescent brutes, smashing windows, riding motorcycles through the flower beds, scrawling on walls? Are these the ones you think of, the ones we spend so much time and effort trying to counter? To some extent they are mine too, but not entirely. A far more brazen daylight vandal inflicts as much, if not more, damage to our park and one who seems to be immune from reproach because of a clever disguise, far more subtle than heavy footwear and obscure hairstyles.

My first category of vandal works as a pair, 'the besotted Mum/Dad and their angelic offspring', easily recognised on warmer days, dressed neatly, laughing contentedly as they run through the flower beds and shrub borders, proud parents strolling off into the distance later to be presented with a posy of flowers, which often resemble pieces of shrub torn by tiny hands, and I have yet to hear the owner of the tiny hands have an explanation as to why one can't pick all the pretty flowers in the park. Walk past the Yew tree and the old Mulberry tree opposite the Cafe in summer and witness for yourself these tiny vandals hanging from the branches, some so small that Granny has had to lift them up to swing from them, face the outrage at your peril if you politely suggest that they move to the playground. 'But they aren't doing any harm', quietly ignoring the broken shoots littering the grass. Watch the games of football beside the Tropical border, how often is it a Mum or

Dad who kicks the ball into the flowers? Slightly older but still often accompanied are the children who see the 'New Winter Garden' and the Rock Garden at the Horse-shoe Pond as a purpose-built Adventure playground combined with a BMX track.

My next category of vandal is also one of a team and perhaps more infuriating because of the myopic response one gets to any reproach: the owner and his or her best friend, or, the gardener's worst enemy. The rules of the park clearly state that all dogs must be under control, and from my conversations with some (not all) dog owners, the problem seems to be the definition of control - perhaps if I give you the park's definition of control you will take my point.

A dog is not under control if, for instance, it is cocking its leg at a newly-planted shrub or over bedding plants about to be planted by a gardener, nor is it under control if it leaves a deposit on freshly raked flower beds, prior to their planting. It is not under control running through the Tropical border; chasing squirrels or other dogs through the flower beds may look amusing and even playful, unless of course you happen to be the person who has just prepared the beds.

Nor do I believe an owner has control of his or her dog if it takes ten minutes of full volume screaming, disturbing the serenity of the park, to get a dog to respond to a command. It isn't controlled to look on bemusedly, telling an irate 'yours truly' that "it always runs through there"; the fact that the area has now been re-landscaped or re-planted does little or nothing to dissuade it.

Quite soon we will see some notices on the gates asking you to keep your dogs on a lead in the ornamental areas of the park. Other notices will be requesting unaccompanied children and those too young to appreciate the damage they might cause, to stay out of certain areas. We arrived at the decision to place notices around the park only after a lot of 'soul searching' and we hope you, the public, will respond and help to make it work.

Please don't think that I am an unbalanced animal- and child- hating individual; I love both, providing they are in harmony with their surroundings, and I am convinced that the vandalism I have described is unconscious and non-malicious, but if any of the above strikes a chord, stop and think - Could you be an unwitting vandal of Gunnersbury Park?

On a different note, I am pleased to report that the Winter Garden is almost complete and we only await the delivery of some trees and shrubs to be able to leave the new entrance to the park looking unusually interesting in the bleakest of months. However it is still worth walking through this area as the spring bulbs are about to appear - the very first snowdrops in the park were seen in the Winter Garden on January 1st.

Friends' Activities

13th March: Victorian clothes on display in the Museum with a talk by the Curator, Ann Balfour Paul, with food and drink. 7.30 pm, all welcome, admission free.

24th March: Park Walk, led by Mike Rowan. Meet at the gates to the Nursery at 2.30.

28th April: Annual General Meeting, in the Temple at 3.00.

6th May: May Festival, Lampton Park, Hounslow. We are taking a stall at this event: offers of help, saleable items etc to Joan Catterall, please.

24th May: Nursery Tour, led by Mike Rowan. The last tour of the nurseries was so interesting that Mike Rowan has agreed to repeat it to show the seasonal changes. Meet at the gates to the Nursery at 6.30.

1st/2nd June: Gunnersbury Park Nursery Plant Sale.

2nd June: Talk - The Rothschilds and their local influence, by Ann Balfour Paul, in the Temple at 3.00.

No doubt you will have been wondering about all the activity at the bottom of the Rest Garden. Interestingly it was an idea from one of the Friends that gave us the theme, and thanks to her assistance we hope to have the beginnings of a collection named after the Rothschilds. This summer a rustic framework will, we hope, be covered with Rose 'Baronne de Rothschild' whilst in other beds Rose 'Baroness E de Rothschild' will flourish. Hopefully we will be able to obtain some Rhododendron 'Exbury Hybrids' which should make an interesting beginning to our collection. I believe other plants have been named after the Rothschilds and if you discover any and know where we can acquire them, please contact me so that we may include them next autumn in our collection.

The Yew Hedge in the Rest Garden was becoming more and more denuded and more unmanageable each year so taking a deep breath we pruned the hedge last year as the first stage in its rejuvenation. The second stage is now complete and we have achieved the final height of the hedge. Now more dense growth will be seen through spring and summer - clothing the base and helping to camouflage the wall, and in two years time a complete hedge will take the place of the bare trunks and branches that had become an eyesore.

22nd June: Visit to Cambridge Botanical Gardens, guide: Mike Rowan. Bring picnic lunch. Coach tickets £6.00 (19 seats). Details from Joan Catterall or Eva Swan.

30th June: Talk - The Rothschilds and Anglo-Jewish Society, by Aubrey Newman, in the Boardroom, 3.00.

13th July: Hounslow Carnival of Youth, Lampton Park, 2.30 - 6.30; we will be taking a stall there.

14th July: Friends Bring and Buy, in the Temple, 2.00.

17th July: Musical Evening in the Temple, in conjunction with the Friends who will be providing refreshments; details to be announced.

31st August: FETE. Our annual major event - keep your diaries free!

We will be opening the Victorian Kitchens to the public on: 29/30 June

27/28 July

24/26 August

28/29 September

On each day the opening time is 2.00. We will need three stewards on each day.

The Gunnersbury Park Joint Committee

Our last Newsletter, November 1984, was written just after the Joint Committee closed the Riding School. We held a public meeting (89 people attended), lobbied Councillors, wrote to the Press, appeared on Thames News, actress Sharon Duce kept the campaign going by adding her support and eventually Hounslow's Labour Group voted to override the decision, to advertise for new operators and to allow the present company a) to re-apply and b) to stay until any new arrangements had been made. The whole episode was a shambles, the sort of shambles we have seen the Joint Committee and its officers produce before and we are thoroughly sick of it. Even at the very end of the affair Councillors Hammett and Morbey of Ealing were still saying the public were against a bridle path when all our evidence was that it was overwhelmingly in favour. The greatest casualty is the Museum which has again lost its £30,000 grant. For two years running it has lost this opportunity and all the responsible officer (Hounslow's Chief Librarian) can say is that we should be grateful for what the Museum has got, like electric light (which in part was only installed in the 1960s)!

The good news is that the Joint Committee has decided to publicise the empty rooms in the Small Mansion and invite suggestions from the public for their use. They are a suite of four very grand rooms with corridors and kitchen. The Friends have listed in our last Newsletter the conditions we would like to see observed. If you know of anyone who could use the rooms please put them in contact with Mr. Briggs, Borough Valuer's Department, Civic Centre, Hounslow.

The really bad news is that at the last meeting of the Joint Committee we had to watch the Councillors - particularly the ones from Ealing who want a 2% cutback - try and cut into their estimates for next year, after they had been told that these estimate had already been cut back to exclude, not just 'desirable' works (£414,660) but also £15,400 of 'essential' works. They debated whether or not electrical wiring that 'needs' to be replaced 'must' be replaced (saving £1000) while the Park visibly crumbles around them! They are nowhere near meeting the challenge of the conditions of the Park and Museum. They admit they are making major reductions in essential work. Whatever their excuses about whose fault it is they are the ones who wanted the responsibility and asked us to elect them. Their behaviour is an absolute disgrace.

AND...

** Have you seen the Muscovy Ducks on the Pond?*

** Have you seen the Winter Gardens over by the East Lodge?*

** Did you see the snowdrops in the Winter Garden?*

** Have you noticed that work has started on the Rest Garden?*

** More bulbs will be coming through soon - look for the splash of colour.*

** Have you seen the repair work that has been done on the island in the Potomac? Did you know that reeds and trees have been replanted around this area, as well as a clearing out of rubbish and the tidying up of shrubs and damaged trees?*

** Have you noticed that a re-planting programme has begun on the Horseshoe Pond rockery in front of the Orangery?*

** Did you know that if you want more information about any work that is being carried out in the Park you can contact John Stock-*

dale (the Park Superintendent) or Mike Rowan. They are always around the park, or ring them on 992 2247.

** Did you know that there are various exhibitions being held throughout the year in the Museum. The exhibition programme for 1985 is enclosed with your Newsletter. Once you have read it and noted the points of interest, please pass it on to a friend.*

** Did you know that the Museum would be interested to hear from anyone who has memories of the Rothschilds locally, who knows of local buildings and organisations connected with the Rothschilds or who has any material associated with the family?*

** Did you know that further details of exhibitions and events can be obtained from the Museum by contacting Ann Balfour Paul (the Curator) or Phil Philo (the Assistant Curator) at the Museum or on 992 1612?*

Joan Catterall.

* * * * *
If you wish to volunteer for redecorating the cafe or to discuss funding the venture, please contact either the Chairman, James Wisdom, 25, Hartington Road, W.4. (994 4231) or the Membership Secretary, Joan Catterall, 39, Lionel Road, Brentford (560 4262).