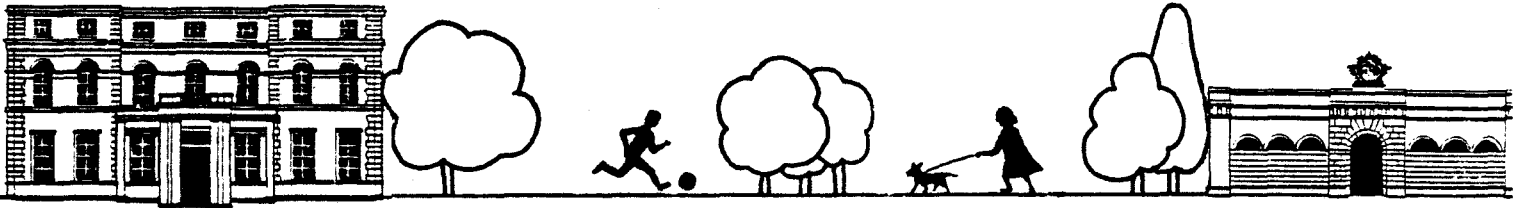


FRIENDS of GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

No. 17
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NEWSLETTER



Future Events

Now is the time to take out your diaries! There is a lovely new exhibition of Victorian Tiles at the Museum, and we have arranged a special Friends' Evening on Friday 21st March, at 7.30. There will be two short talks, from Phil Philo and from Valerie Bott (the Curator of the Grange Museum, L. B. Brent) and we will be serving some 'Victorian' refreshments. We have called the evening 'A NIGHT ON THE TILES' and we would love to see you there. (No need to book.)

At 2.00 in St. Faith's Church Hall, Windmill Road, Brentford we will be opening the doors on another JUMBLE SALE to raise money for the Park. Can you help us on the day? Perhaps you could spend an hour distributing leaflets on the preceding days? Or perhaps you have some Jumble we could collect? Phone Joan Catterall on 560 4262. Oh yes, the date - Saturday 15th March (very soon!).

Have you ever wondered what goes on in the Cellars? Or up the Museum's magnificent staircase? Your chance to see 'BEHIND THE SCENES AT GUNNERSBURY PARK MUSEUM' has arrived. On Sunday 13th April at 2.30 Phil Philo has offered to conduct a party of Friends around. It really is a fascinating experience, but the numbers will have to be limited. Please meet Phil in the Boardroom.

We have not organised a PARK WALK for some time, so to put this right James Wisdom will lead a walk around the Park preceded by a short slide show in the Temple on Sunday 27th April at 3.00. There is still plenty of Princess Amelia's 18th century park to see, and the changes the Rothschilds made are still there (just!) - with luck, you will see the Park with new eyes! All welcome. (Ignore the weather.)

Two other dates for your diary: The Annual General Meeting will be in the Temple at 3.00 on Sunday 11th May. The Annual Fete this year (as an experiment) will also be on a Sunday - the 31st August. More details on both will follow soon.

Managing the Café

The following advertisement was published in the local papers on 7th March: "Energetic person with catering skills needed to supervise the cafes in Gunnersbury Park, open daily Easter - October; also relief staff. 994 4231 Evenings." Do you perhaps know someone who might fit the bill? As we will be keeping the main cafe open seven days a week there is the need to find a deputy for two days a week. There are also plenty of opportunities to provide good quality catering for functions in the Temple, especially during the week. Also we will be needing part-time staff, especially at weekends, and on hot weekends even more staff are required! We can now build on our first year's experience to make the service at Gunnersbury something that the visitors can appreciate and we can be proud of - and, of course, put money back into the Park. Do give this a moment's thought - you might be able to help us.

Tadpoles

As Joan Catterall and Anne Stead wrote in the last Newsletter, they have been regularly cleaning up around the Potomac Lake in the hope of discouraging the fishermen

from leaving too much litter and fishing tackle. Their new ambition is to get frogs and toads back into the lake and for that they need spawn, which many people have - to excess - in their back garden ponds in the spring. They will collect! Phone Joan on 560 4262.

The Friends' Committee

Our Treasurer, Joyce Prince, has moved away from the area and an existing Committee member, Andrew Brown, has taken over this job. We have an Executive Committee of 12 people, and we already know that some of our current committee members will not be standing again at the Annual General Meeting. So there will be some vacancies. Although we are a registered Charity, and although we have our own Limited Company, the Friends is really no more than a voluntary organisation that depends on its members' goodwill. We may have over 400 members but we are still small enough for each person's contribution to be important. Please consider whether you might serve on this committee for a year. You could phone the Chairman (James Wisdom 994 4231) for a chat about what is involved.

The Stables

We have good news to report on the future of the Stable Blocks. It is hard to believe that it was the proposal to convert these buildings into 'prestige' offices in their own fenced-off area that first galvanised local people into action to protect a park that was visibly crumbling. The whole thing started in December 1980. Since then it has been a hard struggle to prove that horses and riding instruction are a better way to bring the buildings back to life than offices and company cars. For years these buildings had been earmarked as a home for the Museum's amazing Transport collection and now it looks as if a well-founded scheme to realise both ideas may happen.

Terry Dove and Julia Heath have been granted a lease to occupy the buildings and establish a riding school with associated activities there. As there have been so many delays since the initial decision was made the full scheme will probably not be up and running by the summer, but there will definitely be a basic service in time for the holidays.

The Joint Committee

At their meeting on 17th January th Gunnersbury Park Joint Committee (6 Councillors from Ealing and 6 from Hounslow) published the annual accounts and estimates for the cost of maintaining the Park and Museum. For the year which ended on 31st March 1985 the gross expenditure had been £548,547 (of which £263,573 was wages). In that year the income from the sports letting, from the catering, from the rents of the flats etc had been £65,107; £24,280 had accrued to the Joint Committee from other accounts and so the net expenditure of the Committee (the 'actual cost' of the Park) had been £459,160. For the year which is due to end this March 31st the expenditure is likely to be £621,190, the income to be £80,090 and therefore the 'cost' will be £541,190. Their estimates for next year show that they think they will spend only £617,430, receive £78,680 and thus the Park will cost £538,750.

Buried in these figures are the budgets for repairing the buildings. For the year which begins on the 1st April the Borough Architect has advised the Committee that they will need to spend, on day to day repairs, essential major repairs and essential re-decorations (inside and out) £72,950. However, the politicians have allowed him only £69,940. But there is worse. The Architect has presented them with a list of 'desirable' repairs and re-decorations (such things as the repair of Amelia's Bathhouse, the Orangery, the East Lodge facade, the Potomac Tower, the park's toilets (which everyone agrees are in a disgusting state) and a long list of improvements). In total these would cost £471,400. The politicians have cut all of them out of the budget. So there you have the figure which is a measure of the dereliction and neglect over the years which has brought the Park to this state. Year after year the politicians have trimmed the budgets, and year after year the decay has mounted up. £471,400 - nearly as much as one year's running costs. We all have the vote on May 8th in the local council elections - but it is a puny weapon against such long-term neglect.