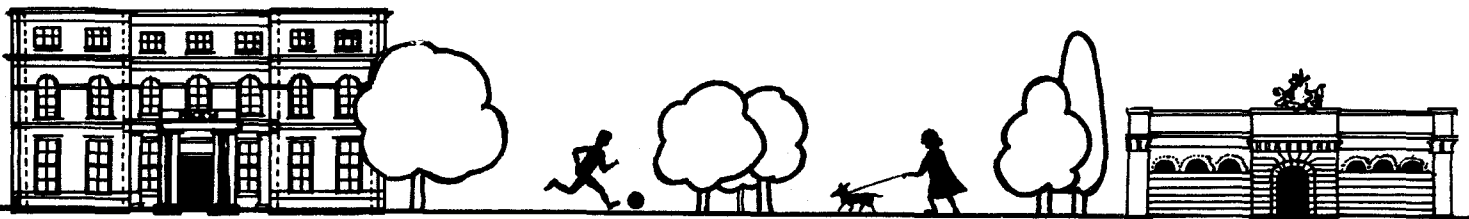


FRIENDS of GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

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NEWSLETTER



Editorial

As we reported in the last Newsletter, the students from the North East London Polytechnic's Postgraduate Architecture course have prepared feasibility studies on how the stables could be used. On the 22nd November they came over to the Scout Hut in Pope's Lane with their tutor, Mrs. Susan Gorka, and presented their ideas to an audience of Friends, Councillors and Council officers.

This Newsletter contains brief summaries of the various schemes. It is important to remember that the students were asked to consider the ways the stables could be used, not how they should be used. They were also asked to discover if their schemes were financially feasible, but they were not expected to act as entrepreneurs. We must remember that their main concern was with the architecture, and how their schemes could use the buildings. The display of their plans in the Scout Hut was very impressive, and these summaries do not do justice to the quality of the work and thought that went into them.

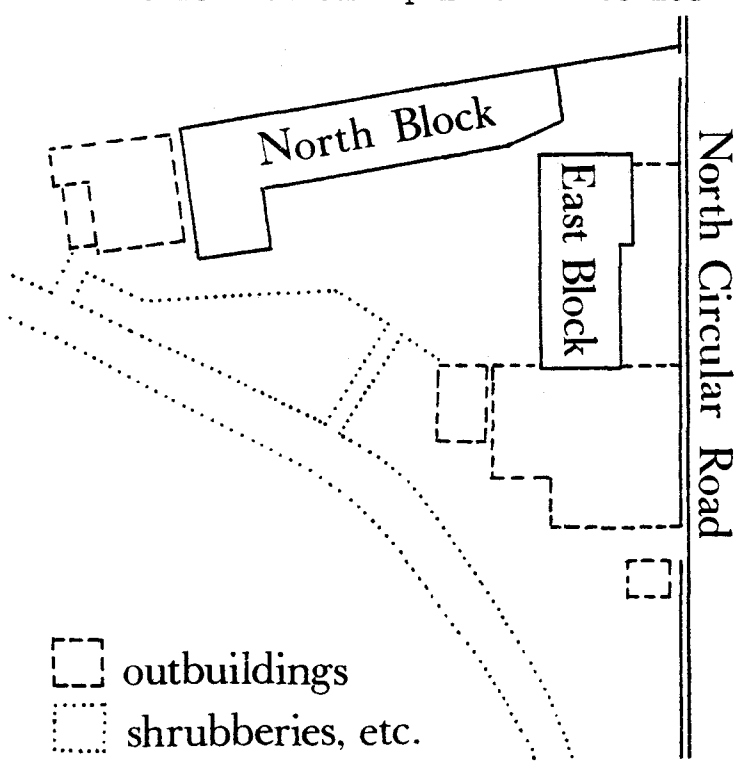
There are now 450 members of 'The Friends' and we have a part to play in deciding the future of the stables. Which of the schemes outlined here is the one you would most like to see? Which of these schemes would you be prepared to do the most for, either in fund raising or in voluntary labour? Please give them your close consideration and let us know if you have strong feelings about them, one way or the other.

The next of our open committee meetings will be in the Sea Scout Hut (in Pope's Lane opposite the entrance to the Park) on Sunday, 10th January, at 3.00 p.m. We hope to have a full discussion of these ideas at that meeting.

If you cannot come along we have included with this Newsletter a sheet of paper to 'prompt' you into letting us know your opinion. Would you return it to us in time for that meeting on the 10th Jan? (Either by post to me at 25 Hartington Road, W.4., or through Doug Stone's letterbox at 228 Gunnersbury Ave.)

If while you are considering these schemes you can see a way in which one of them might work, or you know of someone who may provide useful advice, please let us know. The meeting on the 10th will be followed by a small 'New Year Celebration', so please try to come along.

James Wisdom.



Adventure Therapy Centre

This project, which was proposed by Mike Wilton, would convert the stables into a short-stay or holiday residential centre for disabled people, providing facilities that are not normally available. The indoor facilities, which would occupy the east wing, would be an adapted swimming bath, a hydro-therapy pool and a suitably-equipped gymnasium. The north wing would be converted to accommodation for the visitors and their able-bodied helpers, a dining room, medical room and warden's flat.

The project also envisages out-door facilities, and makes provision for pony-riding, an obstacle/assault course, an aerial runway and a camp site. It proposes siting these facilities on the large tract of waste land due north of the stables within the gothic walls.

This would be a use for the stables which would generate the minimum of traffic and it would use the stables in a way that related to the other activities in the park. It would require no alteration to their external appearance. During their stay both the disabled and the able-bodied would be able to use all the other facilities in the park. A minibus could be used to carry the residents through the park, and existing car parks would be used for arrivals and departures.

Funding such a centre would be difficult but not impossible. It could cost up to £400,000. An initial approach to the Spastics Society produced an encouraging response, and other money may be available from similar sources. The project may be eligible for help from the Silver Jubilee Trust, and the work of repairing and converting the buildings could be done by a team employed through the Manpower Services Commission. It is envisaged that a fee would be charged for a stay at the centre, either from the visitor directly or from their Area Health Authority. The facilities may also be shared with members of the public to produce an extra income. There are similar places to this elsewhere in England (e.g. The Lake District) but nothing comparable is known of in the South-east or the London area.

'Gunnersbury Spa'

This scheme, prepared by Richard Sale, would build upon the idea that Gunnersbury Park is a well-established sports ground. There is a particular need to provide facilities other than the bare minimum of changing rooms for the sportsmen. Also there is a growing interest in the practice of keeping fit and healthy, but not necessarily by engaging in competitive sport.

The east block would retain its existing interior and house two 'activity' rooms opening off the central lobby. These rooms would be for yoga, keep fit, the martial arts, weight training etc. and would be available to the general public and for hire to private clubs. There would be changing rooms, toilets, and a small swimming pool; there is also room for a sauna and solarium.

The north block would be adapted by the

addition of a glazed conservatory-type of extension along the front of the building. Here there would be a restaurant selling 'healthy' food and a shop for sports equipment, books, home-grown produce, herbal remedies etc. Above would be a meeting room for lectures, films, the A.G.M.s of sports clubs etc., together with an office and a flat for the manager.

In the gothic walled area north of the stables a herb garden could be laid out. This would provide stock for the shop as well as giving an extra amenity to the park. Access for cars could be provided down the narrow strip of land at present unused running north to south against the boundary with the North Circular Road.

The Sports Council and the Health Education Council are very enthusiastic about this scheme and can advise on commercial backing. They have suggested approaching tobacco companies for support. A commercial venture of this nature would not conflict with the covenants on the Park.

Children's Domestic Working Farm and Herb Nursery

Miriam Cobrin wanted her project to have a clear social and educational benefit for the local community, to relate to the rest of the park and yet to be commercially viable. She took the theme of her project from the origins of Gunnersbury Park as the estate of a large house which once had a kitchen garden, a dairy, an orangery and even a slaughterhouse, and so her idea of a herb garden and a small farm for domestic animals emerged.

The stables would serve as a domestic farm for school visits during the week and for family visits at weekends and during holiday periods. Special events such as garden fetes or horticultural shows could be accommodated here too. The north block would provide the living quarters for a goat, a pony, a cow and a few ducks, rabbits, hens and perhaps peacocks. The grazing area would be to the north, in the land enclosed by the gothic walls. Here children could come to see the animals and learn about their place in the economy of a domestic estate. Displays about agriculture and horticulture in this area in the past might also be included. They could milk the cow, spin the wool and tend the animals; it would become a field study centre.

In the east block, which would be provided with an elaborate formal pond inside, would be a sales area for herb plants and herb products and a restaurant using herbs on the menu. The covered area to the south could become a dining courtyard with an adjoining store/greenhouse and beyond that a 'secret garden' for children. The orangery might also be used for plant growing and storage. The central courtyard would be laid out as a formal herb garden, with the herbs in movable tubs where possible. The whole arrangement would blend with the dignified but rustic stable blocks. Direct access could be provided from the north of the park via the present disused strip of land running along the North Circular Road boundary, though as the purchases would be small and manageable it is not envisaged that much traffic would need direct

access. An approach to Wilkinson Sword, a local firm which manufactures garden tools, suggested that this sort of scheme may find some commercial sponsorship.

Videocassette Library

This is a scheme prepared by Trevor Jones, who has looked forward in time to find an aspect of life which is likely to grow in importance. He suggests that the buildings could house a library of videocassettes and video equipment. The tapes would be housed in the north block (which inside would resemble a book library); the east block would be used for viewing the video films and would house both individual and group viewing facilities.

This is another scheme which handles the stable buildings with care, though it does involve the construction of an unobtrusive linking building tucked into the corner between the two blocks and masked by a large tree and shrubbery. He also suggests that the entry to the building should be defined by the strategic planting of shrubs and the use of contrasting materials in laying out the paths to the site.

The videotape business is a rapidly expanding one and there should be no difficulty in attracting a commercial backer for the scheme. However this project could provide a wider range of services than merely the hiring out of videocassettes. A large viewing room could be hired and used by groups, societies and associations. It could also be used by local businesses for presentations, training films etc. The video equipment would be hired by local people, businesses and societies. There is also the possibility of installing a small studio with editing facilities for the production of the films. There might even be a market for people wanting to record sports matches, special events or just a pleasant family outing in the park itself. Some year ago, during the debate on the future of the Temple, one proposal was to convert it to a library for large print books; the toy library in Hounslow has now found a home after a long search; a picture loan scheme now operates from Hounslow's libraries. The nature of the library service is expanding, and this scheme fits well into that context.

3 Riding Schemes

Three of the schemes were very closely related to the original use of the stables as accommodation for horses. David Scott had prepared a quite elaborate scheme which gave accommodation to 10 horses within the existing blocks, with tack room, sick box, workshops and a blacksmith's forge on the ground floor and offices, living accommodation and a club room on the first floor. The workshop would provide room for the storage of materials as well as space to work if the project was going to be built by volunteer labour over a long period of time.

The present outbuildings would eventually be re-used for ancillary accommodation for carriages, toilets, stores, trailers, hay and straw stores and manure storage. Some ponies might also be housed here for use by children.

He recommended using the area north of the stables as the training area where people would learn to ride, and in the same vicinity there was room for two enclosures for horses and ponies. The project would be further improved if a covered, floodlit area could be constructed for teaching during the evenings and in poor weather.

The scheme would concentrate on providing tuition in horse-riding because the amount of open space available for riding in the park is limited. Existing horse-riding establishments in other parts of Greater London have their own stabling and access to open space but sometimes no training facilities. Such a scheme would therefore fill a gap in the existing market for horse-riding as well as attracting new customers from West London. If open space for riding had to be found then there are wide grass verges and common land not far from the park, or it may be possible to negotiate a designated perimeter route in the park for use in the winter months when the park is less busy.

James Carr proposed a similar scheme, but one intended to be built in the cheapest possible way. Apart from re-instating the original semi-circular windows in the north block (where the doors now are) there would be virtually no change in the appearance of the buildings. Since they are riddled with wet and dry rot all the timbers and plaster would have to be replaced; James Carr suggests that the east block floors be completely removed, leaving it open from ground to roof and using this area for looseboxes. Later, when funds allow, the floors could be replaced. Since his scheme is also intended to provide facilities for the disabled to learn riding, he proposed that the public areas like lecture rooms, changing rooms and a refreshment room should be kept on the ground floor of the north block. The first floor would provide living accommodation for staff. The area north of the stables would provide the paddock.

Christos Orphanides proposed a horse-riding centre purely for disabled children. He said that expert medical opinion now claimed that this form of activity contributed a great deal to the improvement of disabled children in their physical and mental health. He too would use the area to the north as a teaching area; but he also suggested including an exhibition area for displays on the history of the park itself. Funds for such a project could be found from the various charities working in this field.

David Scott estimated that the project would cost about £250,000. The first work would be to renew the roofs, to repair the facades and to renew the drainage. But the remaining work of reconstructing the interiors could be undertaken once the establishment was operating. There was plenty of scope for unskilled or volunteer labour. Fees for tuition would provide the main income, from individuals, schools, community centres and riding establishments. There could also be arrangements with local firms wishing to add to their sports and social facilities, and London hotels may want to add it to the facilities they offer their guests. The blacksmith's forge might also contribute some income.

James Carr envisaged the work needed to make the stables reusable being done by relatively unskilled labour, possibly a Manpower Services Commission team. This would reduce the costs to £80,000; a voluntary elem-

ent might attract donations of materials as well. He was particularly concerned that something should be done very soon to make the buildings weather-tight before it is too late. Once horse-riding could start there, even on a modest scale, all income from the fees could be ploughed back into renovation work.

Artists' Co-operative

Jim Stewart has prepared a scheme for converting the stables into spaces for studios, exhibition rooms and areas for the performing arts. There would be a tea room and in the summer this and outside events (like Punch & Judy shows) would attract visitors to the complex. From the tea rooms they would wander into the studios to see the craftsmen/artists at work. There would be studios on the ground and first floor, with a small amount of office space for administration, and there would be a rehearsal room for performers. Subject to the needs of the craftsmen there would always be something to see, and it would be a form of entertainment and instruction. Lessons or trial sessions might be provided for children or adults visiting, and a link might be made with the proposed Arts Centre at Brentford. Part of the space would be a sales area for the craftsmen's work.

The other element in this scheme is the manner of its completion. It is envisaged that the buildings would be used by a co-operative of artists and craftsmen. They would restore the buildings in return for a lease on the accommodation provided there. As it would be a 'self-build' cooperative, the final arrangements of the rooms would be left to the members of the cooperative. There are precedents for this type of scheme, with bodies backed by the GLC, the Arts Council, the Crafts Council etc.

In this way this would reconcile the requirements of the covenants with the increase of amenities in the park. If extensions to the buildings are necessary they could run along the back of the east block and on the site of the southern outbuildings.

Pub and Restaurant

One of the most important elements in considering the future of the stables is their very fortunate location. As they are situated on the North Circular Road and within a short distance of the M.4. they have a fairly prosperous catchment area that extends over a considerable distance, as well as being accessible to local residents and to people who work nearby, particularly on the Great West Road.

Nick Nisbet was concerned to find a use for the stables that stayed within the covenants on the Park and one that enabled the buildings to be restored without being drastically altered. It would also be helpful if they could produce an income which could be spent on other buildings and amenities in the Park. For all these reasons he prepared a scheme for converting the buildings into a restaurant, a pub and a private dining room.

The east block would be converted into the pub and the north block into the restaurant

and private dining room. This last facility would perhaps be attractive to local firms during the day and to local groups or members of the public in the evenings. The catering firm would probably be interested/persuaded to develop the nearby orangery as a tea room as part of the same business. All three facilities could take themes from the history of the estate and the area for their decoration.

There would not need to be substantial alterations to the appearance of the buildings, except for improving the row of doors at present giving access to the boat store. As the buildings would need parking close by this would be provided on the presently derelict land to the north of the stables, and some form of safe access would be provided on to the North Circular. Like almost all the other schemes there would have to be some alteration to the regulations about access to parts of the park after dark, but as similar facilities are provided in Richmond Park and Regents Park it is surely not impossible to organise. Though the firm that would do the repair work would expect a secure, long-term lease the Councils would be able to control the standard of the service provided by the granting of a fixed-term licence to the catering operator.

6 More Ideas

Some of the students were unable to come to the Scout Hut to present their schemes, so the following section is a necessarily brief account of their ideas in outline.

Leonie Lorrimer created a 'Little Prince's Palace'. This scheme is intended to provide a novel approach to the teaching of history for children. The north block would be converted into a palace inside, but on a child's scale. All the 'props' - the furnishings and fittings, the wax dummies in costume - would be set out as if in a miniature palace. The north block would be the state rooms, and the east block would be the service wing. But here Gunnersbury Park Museum could display (in full size) its collections of kitchen, laundry, domestic and transport equipment. There would be room also in the north block for a teaching area and a small theatre for puppetry. Leonie reports that Madame Tussauds have shown an interest in the project.

As an alternative she suggested that the building might be used as a centre for training in make-up, hair-dressing and fashion. The north block would provide a reception area, restaurant, offices etc, while the east wing would be converted into a large hall for promotions and displays. It could possibly be used by a body like the Mary Quant organisation.

James Eales has prepared a scheme for a bird sanctuary/aviary. Although the park is already a bird sanctuary, this would give visitors a chance to see the birds at closer quarters. Though the blocks would have to be given new roofs, no additional buildings would need to be constructed. The scheme would provide several indoor aviaries, even for tropical and sub-tropical birds, and on the land to the north of the stables more hardy birds could be accommodated. The north block could house a lecture room, gift shop and display

gallery into which Gunnersbury Park Museum could be extended. It would also be possible to use the gothic folly 'Boathouse' at the Potomac pond as a dovecot. Admission charges and sales should generate sufficient income to support what might become a very popular attraction.

Suzanne Mahdavi envisaged using the stables as a 'city farm'. In the last few years these institutions have been set up in many cities (there are at least 2 in London); Ed Berman's 'InterAction' has developed this kind of project, and a substantial part of their work is with schoolchildren. In Horniman Gardens, south London, there is a children's zoo, where children can see examples of those park animals which are not normally seen by humans.

Victor Grabecki developed the theme of a garden centre. He felt that the plant sales could be handled from the enclosed nursery garden in the north of the park near the main car park, and that the stables could be used as a shop/restaurant complex for all the non-plant items. He felt that many people were looking for advice and expertise when they visited a garden centre, and that they came away poorer but none the wiser. The Gunnersbury Garden Centre should therefore ensure that it was prepared to inform and educate its customers.

A.N.Other developed the sports ground idea, concentrating on squash courts. It was possible to build in the two blocks not only a large number of squash courts, but also a club room, restaurant, a small swimming pool, a sauna and solarium, and a gymnasium. The enormous demand for squash facilities in the London area would attract an already-existing squash club which would raise the investment in return for a lease on the building.

Museum Extension

It has been clear for some years that Gunnersbury Park Museum has had too few resources to do justice to its rich collections and to provide a suitable service to the ratepayers of the two Boroughs which fund it; it has inadequate display space, only two professional staff and very limited funds. The museum's great strength is its collection, which has been built up over 50 years. Unfortunately a very large proportion is stored in the mansion's cellars; the material on display is in grand but very inappropriate settings. The stable blocks have long been unofficially considered ideal for museum use and could provide an excellent extension to the museum service. No other park buildings have the same potential.

The combined population of the Boroughs of Ealing and Hounslow is the equivalent of a large provincial town. In such a town the museum would be seen as a source of civic pride and its importance would be recognised. Admittedly the museum has expanded since its opening in 1929; it now has three rooms, hall and lobby, with occasional use of the board room. The three grand reception rooms present a very large problem for the museum staff. They should be seen as exhibits in their own right, so the scope for display within them is limited. At present in two of them there is a display of bulky items which are incon-

gruous in such a setting - carriages, bicycles, a bath chair, a milk float, laundry equipment (including a massive box mangle) and agricultural implements. The third room, which serves as a temporary exhibition room, has to be frequently closed while the exhibitions are constructed or dismantled - but this blocks public access to part of the permanent displays!

The stable blocks would provide an excellent setting for most of the material which cannot or should not be housed in the mansion. The buildings are far from grand, they have simple interiors, they are very accessible from the park and even their small windows are an advantage since ultra-violet light damages paper and textiles. The north block, with its large doors, could house the transport collection and one of the looseboxes there could be used to house a display about local transport. Two Roman roads and several major coaching routes cross the Boroughs and in the last two hundred years improvements in road, rail and air transport have contributed to the suburban expansion of the area. This would be the place to deal with water transport - the canals and the Thames - and the crafts and industries connected with water, like fishing, osier cutting, brewing, boat-building etc.

For centuries people earned their living off the land, and some still do at the western end of the Boroughs. There should be displays on farming and market gardening, perhaps alongside an account of the economy of the Gunnersbury Park estate itself. There should be displays on domestic life, and perhaps a room upstairs in the north block could be reconstructed as a groom's room. There should be displays on industry in the area - laundry, printing, brewing, Firestones, Hoovers etc.

In the grand rooms of the mansion could be displays of clothing and accessories, dolls, toys and adult pastimes, pottery, paintings, furniture - all from the stores. The present social history room could become the temporary exhibition space as it can be easily closed off.

These proposals should be implemented as part of a plan for the future development of the museum service whose work is far more than just providing an attraction in the park. A local museum 'rescues' the everyday commonplace items which provide a collective memory for the local community. In times of rapid change, this matters. Such items are otherwise likely to be lost forever.

The museum is a service owned and funded by the public, through the local authority; this is the pattern for local history museums throughout Great Britain. The Area Museums Service for S.E. England make grants available for new displays and purchase of equipment if the local authority puts forward its share of the costs. The same principle applies to grants for the restoration of listed buildings. However some major funds, such as the Pilgrim Trust or the Gulbenkian Foundation, will only make money available to corporate bodies like local authorities. The stables urgently need protection from the weather to ensure that they survive. Then when funds are available the Joint Committee will be able to take advantage of the grants to expand the museum service into one that really does justice to its rich collections.

Val Bott.

The Musical Museum

One possible use for the stables is as a home for the Musical Museum, at present in St. George's Church, Brentford High Street. So on December 14th a party of Friends were made most welcome by the curator, Frank Holland, M.B.E.. Although it was a cold night he flung himself into the task of showing us the museum and we discussed how the stables could be converted.

Over the years Frank Holland and his band of helpers have collected a particular type of musical instrument. They are pianos, organs, violins etc. that play music automatically, usually from a roll on which perforations have been cut during a performance.

The collection of instruments is now very large, and many of the instruments themselves are quite substantial. Inside the church the helpers repair and restore instruments to add to the collection; occasionally they can sell a repaired duplicate to augment the funds.

The public pays an entrance fee to visit the museum, and they have a guided tour which reveals the history and development of these instruments. As the instruments are played in turn the tour is enormously enjoyable. There is also a shop which sells books, records, cassettes and of course piano rolls to people with their own instruments.

We ascertained from Frank Holland that there would be sufficient room in the stables for his collection. He would be able to lay it out in the best sequence for a tour and he would also be able to promote small concerts and performances. Meanwhile in the church would remain the magnificent Wurlitzer and other instruments for larger concerts and performances.

The museum at present runs on goodwill and willpower. One advantage of moving to the stables would be that attendances at the museum might well increase and its finances thus improve. Frank Holland wished to make this move some twenty years ago before the buildings had deteriorated. It is his full-time work keeping the museum and its instruments going. He can work magic bringing old instruments to life; restoring rotting stables is another matter entirely.

However the museum is nationally and internationally known and has great potential for the publicity necessary if large sums of money had to be raised. It would mean a lot of hard work, but it is certainly not impossible to envisage the stables bustling with visitors and surrounded by the sounds of his astonishing collection of instruments.

"Young Friends"

- Are you between 16 and 26?
- Are you interested in promoting social and fundraising activities?
- Would you like to form a 'Young Friends'?
- Then please contact Karen Swan, 152, Gunnersbury Ave, W.3. (993 2692).

A Bird Box

The children in Class III at Lionel Road School have become very enthusiastic about the ecology of their local park, especially about the bird life. They have been collecting old stamps to raise funds for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds.

Now, through the Friends of Gunnersbury Park and Museum, they have presented a wooden nesting box to the park. I was delighted to go along to the school on the 9th December to collect it - let's hope that the birds are as pleased as we were and nest there next spring!

James Wisdom.

The Museum

MARJORIE KOSTENZ: EMBROIDERIES AND OTHER WORKS.

The embroideries of Marjorie Kostenz (1902 - 1979) are bold and often elaborate in design with rich colours. Her work was chiefly inspired by the life and landscape of Provence with its stone villages perched on hills, suntanned workers gathering their harvest and colourful festivals. She lived in Provence during the last war after which she studied embroidery at the Goldsmiths' College London, with Constance Howard. She was a member of the Embroiderer's Guild and her work is held in a number of collections.

This exhibition shows Marjorie's originality as an embroideress with a section on her techniques but also includes pastels, drawings and watercolours, including a portrait of her by the eminent artist Mark Gertler, Marjorie's first husband. After his death (in 1939) she married Franz Kostenz. She spent the last years of her life in Ealing.

This exhibition runs until 10th January. The museum is closed on the 24th, 25th, 26th and 28th December. Weekday opening, from 1 to 4 p.m., weekends (and Jan 1st) from 2 to 4 p.m. For further information phone 992 1612.

Friends' Activities

Dates for your diary:

Jan 10th, 3.00 p.m., Open Committee Meeting, Sea Scout Hut, Pope's Lane, followed by a small 'New Year Celebration'.

Feb 14th, 3.00 p.m., Open Committee Meeting, Sea Scout Hut, Pope's Lane (opposite the entrance to the Park).

March 14th, 2.30 p.m., at the Temple, Gunnersbury Park, A Talk, followed by A Walk, on "The History Of Gunnersbury Park" by James Wisdom.