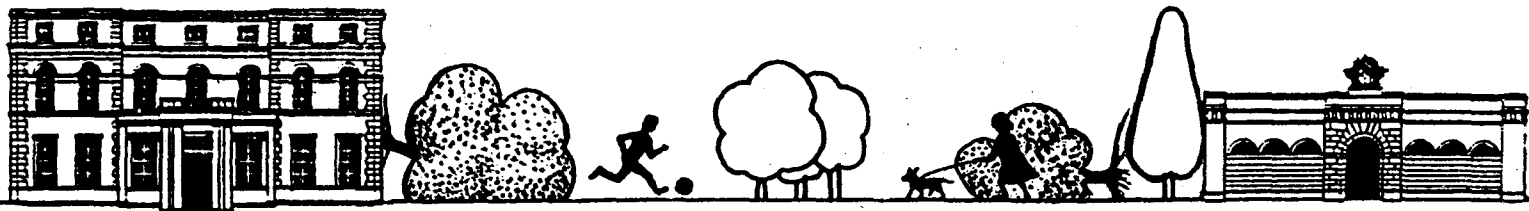


FRIENDS of GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

No.22
Feb. 1988

NEWSLETTER



The Stables

The project to convert the Stables into a Craft Centre with an extension to the Museum is collapsing. The possibility of office development is getting nearer. The Gunnersbury Park Joint Committee has told Ealing and Hounslow Councils that its "preferred option" is for commercial use as an office building.

Back in 1981, standing in the car park of Gunnersbury Boys' School after the public meeting which rejected the office development scheme, Dennis Beadle of Dimsdale Developments shouted: "You'll see, I'll be back within a year!"

His optimism about the date was wrong, but his grasp of local authority finances might turn out to be correct!

This is the story so far. The Stables were built for the Rothschild family in the 1830s when they bought the Park. Like many buildings in the Park, they are on the Grade II List of Historic Buildings. The complex of buildings also includes the Coach House, a boiler house, loos, a building that was a shower block with changing rooms and a covered area.

Inside the Museum is a remarkable collection vehicles - two Rothschild carriages (beautifully restored), a pony phaeton, the last hansom cab to operate from Ealing Broadway Station, early motor bikes, penny farthings, delivery vehicles and so on. They look a bit out of place in the Rothschilds' drawing room!

Also, the Museum needs space to build up its collection of all the agricultural and horticultural equipment that would tell the history of the Boroughs of Ealing and Hounslow when they were a series of farming villages. In our own time the industry in this area is changing (just think of the Golden Mile along the Great West Road) and the Museum could be saving enough manufacturing equipment to tell that story in the future.

So, when the Stables ceased to be used as changing rooms, the plan was to move part of the Museum there. Instead the Joint Committee left them to rot.

This Joint Committee has been quite good at leaving buildings to rot. An 18th century dairy near to the Large Mansion fell down in the early 1970s. The East Lodge (built about 1840) was lived in until about 1970 - now it is a ruin (though the Department of the Environment would not give permission to demolish it). The Orangery is a ruin. Princess Amelia's Bath House is a ruin. The Potomac Tower is a ruin. Even the Temple was a ruin until the Department of the Environment gave them a grant to repair it. All of these are listed, historic buildings.

Is there something wrong about the way the Park is financed? Since 1965 the Joint Committee has been 6 councillors from L B Ealing and 6 from L B Hounslow. They both pay the same amount. The actual administration is handled by Hounslow (as the Park is completely within Hounslow's boundary). In recent years Ealing has been Tory and Hounslow Labour. At the last election Ealing went Labour and is now rate-capped. The shared responsibility means that no-one carries the blame and so the normal pressures of the electorate cannot operate. It is hard enough getting something to happen in one borough, but to get two to act together is impossible. Even worse, if one council wants to save money, the other takes out its equivalent share and the Park gets doubly clobbered!

The evidence of decay all around the Park, and the fact that after 50 years of existence the Museum has only two full-time curatorial staff, shows that the system of administration has utterly failed. Getting thousands of pounds by leasing the Stables won't solve this problem. Even if both councils don't just reduce their expenditure on the Park by the same amount (which is most likely) we are all going to be in the same position in a few years when the cash has been used up.



The details of the failure of the current proposals are particularly sad. Rentokil, the company that specialises in repairing rotting buildings, suggested to the Joint Committee that they would be interested in working on the Stables. What is more, they would be prepared to organise the fund-raising if it was for a socially beneficial purpose.

So Hounslow's officers came up with a scheme to use the buildings for a Museum extension, 2 or 3 craft studios, a gallery for exhibitions of crafts, a shop, a cafeteria, a small residential flat and various other goodies.

The Rentokil surveyed the buildings to establish how much the repairs would cost (£400,000) and various consultants were employed to find out if (a) the scheme would fit into the buildings (it would) and (b) if the public would come to it and how much its running costs would be.

Then things started to go wrong. Firstly, Ealing has been rate-capped, so they are looking for ways of saving money. Secondly, the consultants seem to have got carried away and ended up assuming the project needed to employ 13 people and that the fitting-out costs would be many hundreds of thousands of pounds. At the same time the Borough Architect presented his lists of Essential and Desirable works in the Park - this runs into thousands of pounds also.

So the Joint Committee took fright and went back to the 1981 proposal of offices. They also suggested using the money for a

Park Building Repair Fund.

They have not thought this proposal through. If they lease the Stables for offices the developer will repair them - so they don't need a Building Fund. They are going to get the Orangery repaired by "planning gain" from a development beside the Park on the Great West Road - so they don't need a Building Fund. The other building works in the Park are minor compared to these two. The only circumstances which would change things is if they somehow "lose" the repair of the Orangery (and a cynic would be expecting this to happen any day now).

They will lose the chance to expand the Museum. They will have to go to the Lands Tribunal for permission to break the Covenants which restrict the use of the Park to a place of leisure and recreation. They will try to pin the failure onto central government. They won't have solved the basic problem of the Park. And when the crisis returns in a few years' time, they won't have the Stables to sell to raise the money!

JOHN STOCKDALE

As you may have heard, John Stockdale has moved on to pastures new. We wish him all the very best in his new job and thank him for the help he has given us in the past and the interest he has always shown in everything we did. Tony Gregory has joined the Park as Superintendent - we welcome him and hope he will enjoy working in the Park.

The Kitchens

Over the years the Friends have been restoring the Victorian Kitchens next to the Museum. These are a number of rooms at the end of the Large Mansion which show what life was like "below stairs" in a 19th century great house.

We are only able to open these rooms on FOUR weekends a year and these are the dates for your diary for 1988: 25 and 26 June, 30 and 31 July, 20 and 21 August and 24 and 25 September. We open up at 2.00 and close at 6.00pm. Admission is free.

The Acton branch of NACRO has been working on these rooms on our behalf and the results have been impressive. The Museum has recently discovered a plan of this area of the house and found out that the room we were about to decorate as the House keeper's Room is, in fact, the Chef's Room! The other rooms are now the Butchery and the Pastry Room but we have known them as the Laundry and the Diesel Store!

Two TV programmes have been filmed there (one for children's TV and the other for a Victorian "Food & Drink Programme") so we have nearly £200 extra to spend this season. We always ask for volunteers - can you come along for one afternoon (or part of one?) and just welcome and supervise the visitors? You don't need to be an expert in

Victorian cooking - just a smiling face! If so, Joan Catterall (560 4262) organises us; she really would be glad to hear from you.

October Storm

Those "hurricane" winds blew down about 50 of the Park's trees and did £8,500 of damage to fencing and railings. Even the masthead of this Newsletter has been affected!

The Park was closed for a week while the Councils' staff worked on the dangerous trees along public roads. Mike Rowan and I walked round the Park on the Saturday morning to assess the damage; there were too many half-fallen trees, or trees with broken boughs hanging by a twig, to open the Park safely.

We immediately contacted the Chiswick House Friends and that weekend drafted notices for both the "Times" and the "Gazette" series of local papers, appealing for sponsorship for trees at £35 a time. We also printed posters which the Leeds Building Society put into their windows. As a result of all this we raised £350.

We were going to circulate the Friends membership with an 'emergency' newsletter but events overtook us. However it is not too late if you wish to contribute.

I WISH TO SPONSOR A TREE/DONATE TOWARDS A TREE IN GUNNERSBURY PARK.

THE TREE I WOULD LIKE TO SEE PLANTED IS:.....

(The choice of species must be in keeping with the area and the final choice will lie with the Park Superintendent, although he will take your preference into account. The sponsorship fee is £30.)

I enclose a cheque for tree(s) Total:.....

(Made payable to The London Borough of Hounslow)

NAME & ADDRESS:.....

:.....

Please return this form to Joan Catterall, 39, Lionel Road, Brentford. (560 4262)

If you would like to discuss sponsoring a tree, please phone either Joan Catterall or Mike Rowan (Area Manager), Leisure Services, Civic Centre, Hounslow (570 7728).

Cheapest Fun in London?

Do you know how much it costs to enjoy yourself at Gunnersbury Park? A child can have twenty minutes on the Boating Pond for 30 pence. If you want a game of bowls, a "casual user" pays 85p for an hour and you can hire a set of woods for 65p and a locker for £2.20. The overshoes and slip mats are provided free. A ticket for the season is £27.40. All these charges are much less for women of 60 or men of 65 and over.

This year for the first time you can hire a croquet mallet for 50p (with a £2.50 deposit). If golf is your game, then on the pitch and putt you will pay 90p per round (and 95p if you lose the ball); on the putting green it is 50p per round (though it will be £1.10 if you lose the ball!) and a deposit of £3.30 on the putter. Tennis players pay £1.30 per hour (less for children and OAPs) and if after that you need a deck chair, that will be 35p. A day's fishing on the Potomac Lake will cost you £2.20.

If you are organised enough to play team games there are various charges according to the quality of the ground and whether you are locally based. All 20 days of the season on the best cricket table will cost £595.00, but an occasional game

on another pitch is £29.75. An occasional game of hockey or lacrosse will cost you £14.85 if you are local but rounders is only £1.70 and netball a mere £1.45!

Football and rugby clubs from outside the area who want the best quality ground for the 30 weeks of the season will pay £669.40 (but they do get hot showers afterwards!) This year, also for the first time, there will be four cycle races around part of the Park on Saturday mornings - the fee for this has not yet been fixed.

If you are a film company wanting to use the Park as a "location" then it's £110 per hour - but if it is an educational film or a children's programme or for the Central Office of Information it is (only) £30 per hour. A local group can hire the Temple for £3.05 per hour or the Lecture Room in the Small Mansion for the same price; the charge for catering functions is £7.15 per hour. Finally, you can hire a kitchen to prepare your cricket team's teas for £2.95 or a spin dryer for 15p when the game has been rained off!

The "free" attractions in the Park are the children's swings, the flowers and trees, grass for dogs, the car park and, of course, the Museum. 180 acres of the cheapest fun in London?

FRIENDS OF GUNNERSBURY PARK AND MUSEUM

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL FORM

The subscription rate is £3 per member for the year beginning on 1st April each year. For convenience you may wish to include a subscription for the year commencing 1 April 1988.

NAME AND ADDRESS (Block Letters Please):.....

:.....

SIGNATURE:.....

Please send this form to the Membership Secretary, Joan Catterall, 39, Lionel Road, Brentford.

We sometimes need volunteers for different aspects of the Society's work and we are assembling a list of people on whom we can occasionally call. If you would like to be added to this list, please add your phone number.

Are there any activities you would like the Friends to organise, or do you have any suggestions of ways the Society could be improved? We would welcome any ideas:

:.....

Summer Fete

We held our Summer Fete on 6th September. We started at 11am and soon everything was jogging along nicely - hot dogs and tea selling well, ice creams being enjoyed, stallholder busy selling. And then, at 2.15 it came, roaring across the field - wind with rain - and by 2.45, except for one or two hardy dog-walkers, the park was clear of people. No more fete, no more ice cream, just wet, windy rain. Still, we did raise just over £200 and next year, who knows, we may have better luck with the weather. . .

Joan Catterall

Carter's Steam Fair

On 19th and 20th September John Carter's Steam Fair came to Gunnersbury Park. The weather on the Saturday was very poor but by the time evening came the rain had stopped. The magic of the fair could be seen in the colourful lights and heard in the music that came from the Roundabout, the Chair-o-plane and the other equipment that John, Ann and their family had brought along with them.

Those of you who visited this fair, which spent most of the summer in the west London area, will have seen the beautiful and colourful painting on the equipment - this was done by Ann Carter, helped by her family, during the winters when they are not on the road.

At 10pm it was time for the firework display. It was lovely, with rockets and golden rain, whizzers and screamers, Roman candles - the dark night sky was lit up with red, gold, silver and green. After the firework display everyone started to drift home and all that was left on a dark, damp, summer night was the memory, with the sound of steam from the fair gently hissing and the music and lights slowly dying away as the fair was shut down for the night.

Sunday the 20th was glorious, a real sunny September day. We had invited along (at the request of Mike Rowan and John Carter) local charities and about a dozen of us set up our stalls alongside the fair. Between 12 noon and 2pm it was fairly quiet but then the people came out to enjoy the fair and support the local charities.

It was a lovely family day, for this was who came - mums, dads, kids, nans and grandads, some to wallow in the nostalgia of what fairs had been like when they were young but all of them to have a good time!

Candy floss, ice cream and hot dogs, rides on the Roundabout and Helter-Skelter, roll-a-ball and fish-for-a-duck, everyone enjoying themselves in the September sun. But best of all the colour and glitter and

music of the fairground. Fantastic - this was summer at its best! The one we'll all remember when we look back in the chill of winter. Roll on next summer and we hope that more magic will come to Gunnersbury Park.

Joan Catterall

The Pavilion Café

When we took over the catering in the Park in April 1985 it was by a licence agreement with the Joint Committee for a period of three years. This comes to an end in March. The Council officers recommended to the Joint Committee that they put the contract out to public tender again and we are sure that we could not match the highest likely bid. Therefore we have decided not to compete and so we will cease our operations at the end of March.

When we took it over we had two aims: to improve the standard of service and to spend the profit on improving the Park and Museum. We have succeeded with the first but so far we have not succeeded with the second. We have redecorated the whole of the Pavilion Cafe - it is now a bright and clean park cafe. We have redecorated the Coronation Chalet (for the footballers in the winter) - this had mould on the ceiling and the floor but is now quite smart and respectable! We have also repainted the interior of the Temple and started to use it for buffets, functions, wedding receptions, etc.

The food we sell in the Pavilion Cafe is now almost all home-made, on the premises. The range of cakes, confectionery, pies, drinks and so on is far better and more extensive than 4 years ago. We have been getting a good reputation and our till receipts show that we have increased the number of purchasers from 27,000 in our first year to 42,000 in our second. The turnover has increased to perhaps £40,000 this year. We have increased the opening hours so that, throughout the year, people can rely on the place being open - though this winter we have closed for some of the weekdays because of the shortage of staff.

As far as we can judge from people's comments, we have done a good job in raising the standard of the service. It has been extremely hard work, particularly on hot Sundays when everybody wants an ice cream and a canned drink! We are sad to be stopping but we hope that we have set a standard to any new operator and that they will carry on with the improvements so that we end up with at least one park in London where the catering is an attraction and not a failure.

The Museum

The Museum has recently purchased two pictures at auction. One is a pencil and watercolour sketch by J W Topham Vinall of the Long Gallery inside the Museum in 1930 with an exhibition of pictures of Westminster on the walls. He was an artist living in Chiswick and the particular interest of the picture is that it shows the frieze of the gallery painted orange-brown. The other is a view of the earlier Gunnersbury House between 1787 and 1790, done in pen, grey ink and watercolour by H G Oldfield.

Future Events

Behind the Scenes at the Museum

On Thursday 18 February we are holding an informal event in the Museum, starting at 7.30pm.

We shall be taking small parties "Behind the Scenes" to see the parts of the Museum the public normally does not see. This will include a visit to the cellars where most of the Museum's exhibits are stored. You won't believe your eyes!

Phil Philo, the Curator, will also talk to us about the major project he has planned for this year: Food & Farming in West London. This will be similar to the very successful "Stitch in Time" project which concentrated on clothing.

We will also be able to see the Museum's latest acquisitions, including the paintings referred to elsewhere in this Newsletter and the collection of Hounslow swords given by John Tofts White.

Please come along - we shall be serving light refreshments as well.

A date for your diary:

The Brentford and Chiswick Local History Society will be visiting Kentwell in Suffolk on 25 June to see this great house come alive with people dressed in Tudor clothes and living as if they were in the 16th century. Many of you will remember Margaret Schofield-Palmer's fascinating talk at the Museum as her experience there as "gentry". If you interested in joining the trip, phone James Wisom (994 4231) for details.

And...

Faithful and long-standing members of this society have been accustomed to receiving a Newsletter every three months or so but this is the first one since June of last year. You were perhaps beginning to wonder where the Friends of Gunnersbury Park had gone? The answer is - all aspects of the society were continuing but without the essential link with the members. All I can do is apologise and ask: Is there anyone out there who wants to edit a Newsletter?

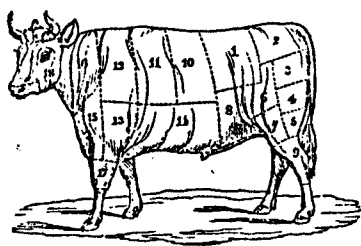
This unfortunate failure on the Editor's part means that our subscriptions have got rather behind. The subscription runs from 1 April each year. It is £3.00 which covers the administration and Newsletter costs, together with enough to be able to make a reasonable donation to the Park and Museum each year.

This year we will be in a position to make a considerable donation to the Park and Museum, not just because our usual fund-raising schemes have been successful but because the Pavilion Cafe was used for one day as a film set. The film, starring Robert Stephens, will probably be called "The Fruit Machine" and will be released in the summer. We ended up with £900 to put towards donations!

The appeal for trees after the storm resulted in £350 being received to which we have added £150. We have handed the money over to the Park and in one of the letters of thanks Mike Rowan (Area Manager) wrote: "As you are aware the damage to the Park was so severe it will be many years in its restoration to its former glory, but hopefully our children and grandchildren will be in a position to appreciate your efforts". It's not too late to donate to this appeal - you will see the details on our subscription reminder form.

Bric-a-brac sales on the first Sunday of the month (usually in the Cafe) are now a regular feature of our fund-raising. Joan Catterall and Marion Booth are the organisers and are always interested in donations of items for sale; Joan's phone no. is 560 4262 and Marion's is 992 9891.

* Please remember that on the subscription form is a space for you to tell us what sort of occasions you would enjoy - should we organise talks, walks, visits, working parties, evening meetings, weekend events? Please tell us your ideas.



PLEASE HELP YOUR LOCAL MUSEUM BY PROVIDING
INFORMATION
FOR

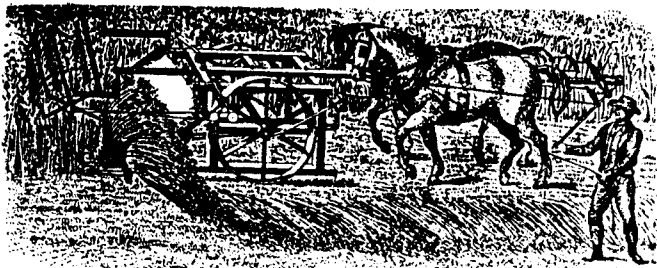
1989

FOOD & FARMING
YEAR

From June 1988 until June 1989 the Museum will be carrying out a major survey of Food and Farming in the London Boroughs of Ealing & Hounslow.

If you have any information on local farms, past and present, food processing factories and retail outlets, the varied diets of the local community or anything peculiar to the area then please contact the Museum.

From June until October 1989 the Museum will be staging an exhibition showing the results of the survey with associated talks, events and activities.



GUNNERSBURY PARK MUSEUM

Local history museum for the London
Boroughs of Ealing and Hounslow.

OPEN

Summer: Mar-Oct (end BST)
Mon-Fri 1-5pm
Sat, Sun & BHols 2-6pm

Winter: Nov-Feb
Mon-Fri 1-4pm
Sat, Sun & BHols 2-4pm

Closed 24-26 Dec., 1 Jan &
Good Friday.

ADMISSION FREE

ACCESS

Vehicles: entrance in Popes Lane
Underground: Acton Town
British Rail: Gunnersbury
Bus: E3 (daily), N0.7 (Sundays)

Gunnersbury Park Museum
Gunnersbury Park
London W3 8LQ
(01-992 1612)

Administered by the Leisure Services
Department of the London Borough of
Hounslow for the London Boroughs of
Ealing & Hounslow.



Exhibition Programme 1988

TEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS which can be
seen alongside the main displays.



until JAN 17 **AN END TO WASHDAY BLUES**
A travelling exhibition of
machines from the Zanussi
collection showing the
development of washing
machines.



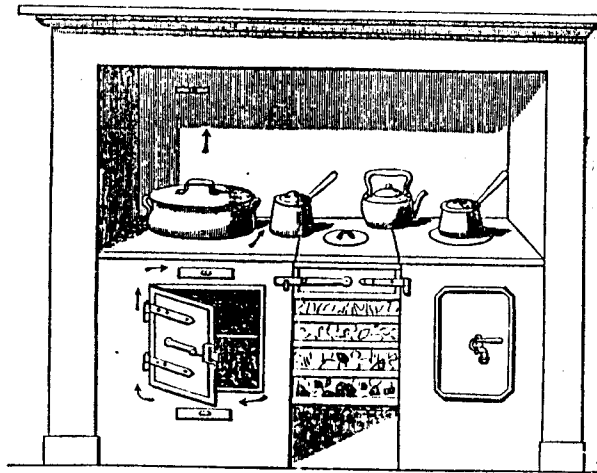
29 JAN - VARIATIONS ON AN ORANGERY
 28 FEB Drawings by architectural students from N.London Polytechnic showing ideas for the restoration and use of the 1830's Orangery in Gunnersbury Park.



4 MAR - A HISTORY OF THE BLACK PRESENCE IN LONDON
 27 MAR The story of the influence of black people on London's culture and society. By The London Strategic Policy Unit.



22 APL - BRENTFORD FOOTBALL CLUB
 22 MAY & WE WON THE CUP
 A look at the development of the local team linked with a travelling display about the F.A.Cup.



25-26 JUN THE VICTORIAN KITCHENS
 30-31 JLY The next exciting stage of restoration work by NACRO on behalf of the Friends of Gunnersbury. Come and visit the Butchery, Pastry Room and Chef's Room.

3 JUN -
 31 JULY

EXPLORING LIVING MEMORY
 This enormously popular oral history exhibition comes to W. London with displays, talks, workshops and demonstrations.



6 AUG - THE YOUNG CREATORS
 4 SEPT Student designs ranging from graphics to engineering and jewellery to furniture. Organised by the Design Council

16 SEPT - A TOUCH OF COLOUR
 23 OCT Paintings and sculptures by visually disabled people organised in conjunction with the Royal National Institute for the Blind.

5 NOV - RECENT ACQUISITIONS
 31 DEC A chance to see the vast range of new items collected by the Museum in 1987-88, many generously given by local people.