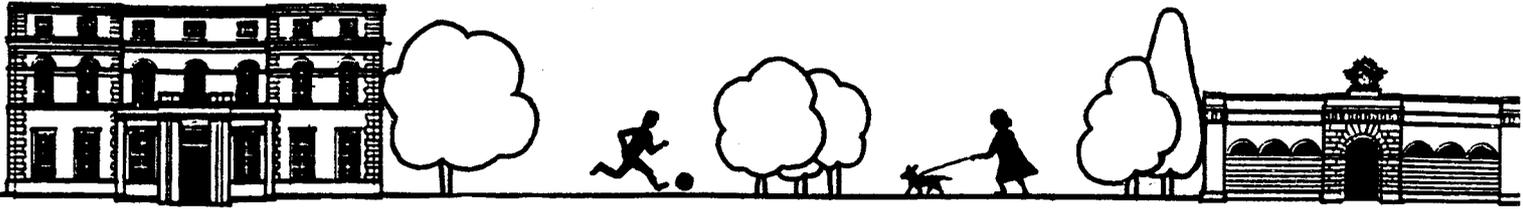


FRIENDS of GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

No. 24
July 1988

NEWSLETTER



Annual General Meeting

We will be holding the Annual General Meeting of the Friends in the Museum at 3.00 on Sunday 24th July. We are always interested in finding members to serve on the Committee. If you are willing to do so or you would like to discuss what is involved, please phone the Chairman (James Wisdom) - 994 4231. The Secretary, Ken Hawkes, should have nominations by the beginning of the meeting.

Please come to the AGM - we don't put pressure on you to do any work! It is a chance to discuss the direction of the Society, the things we are doing and to check over the finances (which, as you will see, are in a very healthy position). We should be finished by 4.30.

Dog Bins

Those of our members who live in L.B.Hounslow will have had a circular from the Leisure Services Department about dog mess in parks. Hounslow has decided to install special bins for dog owners to use and it has given away thousands of card "pooper-scoopers" to get the scheme off the ground.

We decided that we wanted Gunnersbury to be included in the scheme and so donated £300 for the purchase of 6 bins. We asked for them to be put near to the grassy areas where we know children play and families have picnics. We have since learnt that Hounslow has managed to find 9 more bins, so there will be a total of 15. Not many when you consider the Park is 180 acres, but enough to cover the most heavily-used areas.

The wide expanses of grass at Gunnersbury make it an ideal dog-walking park and many doggers, like many joggers, use it every day. The Councils already have powers to exclude dogs from sports areas, children's playgrounds and certain ornamental gardens. At Gunnersbury the only excluded areas are the two children's playgrounds. This seems to work with the Main Playground because the gates usually swing closed, though at the small Playground by the Cafe (where there is no gate) dogs often go in.

The letter to all Hounslow residents makes it clear that if the dog bin scheme doesn't work then the Council will have to take powers to exclude dogs from more areas. Our donation is designed to help doggers and non-doggers use the park harmoniously together. Let's hope it gets a positive reaction!

The Orangery

At last, a success! The Orangery is going to be restored! The officers of Hounslow Council have managed to negotiate the work with the company currently redeveloping the site on the Great West Road which backs on to the Park (once called Henley's Garage, then the Fiat Tower). This company will do a full restoration of the building - it is a Listed Building so the work will be of a high standard, and they will install heating so it can be used as a conservatory. The restoration will not cost the Councils anything, as it is part of a planning agreement resulting from the development of the "Fiat" site.

In 24 issues of this Newsletter, this is the best news we have ever reported. Last year we reported that this was a possibility, and one local paper picked up that we had praised one of the Council's officers for negotiating the deal. We were then rebuked by the Leader of the Council, Dave Wetzel, who said that many Council Officers should be praised for this deal. OK - tell us who they are and we'll praise the lot! This is the first time Gunnersbury has had a success with its decaying buildings for a very long time. Just to strip out the windows and roof over the top to turn it into somewhere for people to sit was going to cost £30,000, and this proposal is for a full restoration - so who knows how much money has been saved?

Open Air Bazaar

Our Open-Air Bazaar this year will be on the first Sunday in September, Sunday 4th, starting at 10.30 in the morning and running through until about 4.30. This year we will be holding the event on the grass beside the Main Children's Playground, beside the Coronation Chalet and the Farm Dressing Rooms. There is an avenue of fine trees there, so in the unlikely event of high winds and rain we will have some protection! We hope we will once again be supported by local charities and that everyone will have a very successful day.

Carter's Steam Fair

On the 6th and 7th of August we will once again welcome John Carter's Steam Fair to Gunnersbury Park. This is undoubtedly the best quality fair operating in London at the moment, with a number of hand-painted and beautifully restored rides, all from the days before the American electric equipment became popular. John Carter's rides (Galloping Horses, Flying Chairs, See-Saw Gondola, Helter-Skelter etc) were made by the firms which prospered in Victorian times making steam-powered agricultural equipment, and the sight of his Fair steaming and gleaming in the Park was very exciting. This year he will be using the area near to the gate facing Gunnersbury Avenue at the "bottom" of the Park near the School. On the Sunday the Friends and other local charities will have stalls beside the Fair, and we hope you will come along and enjoy yourselves as you did last year.

Victorian Kitchens

New Readers Start Here: To run their Household, the Rothschild Family needed a huge number of workrooms for their staff. When visitors see the Museum, they see the grand rooms of a 19th century Mansion. From their earliest days the Friends have been restoring the Kitchens so that visitors can see "below stairs". In recent years we have been raising money to finance the work done by NACRO. While we were good at cleaning and painting, the work is getting more specialised - plastering, tiling, carpentry, wallpapering (with "authentic" Victorian paper); the team from NACRO have been doing a tremendous job.

Discovery! Plans of the Mansion have been found showing exactly how the rooms were used. We called one room The Housekeeper's Room - now we know it was used by the Rothschild's TWO French Chefs. Dairy, Still Room, Valet's Room, Laundry, Silver Safes, Butchery - they are all falling into place. The opportunities are becoming more exciting. We now have FIVE rooms open to the public and as the years roll on and the project grows, more and more people are recognising its importance. Film and TV companies have started to get interested.

Help? Everyone reading this is already helping, as part of your subscription is spent on the work. We provide volunteers to open the rooms on 4 weekends a year. This year we showed the rooms to 140 people on Saturday 25th June and 440 on Sunday 26th. We will open them again on 30th and 31st July, 20th and 21st August and 24th and 25th September.

Volunteer? We just need people to help welcome the visitors, to keep an eye on the rooms, to sell guidebooks and postcards. It's all very easy and straightforward. Please phone James Wisdom (994 4231) or Joan Catterall (560 4262) if you can spare one afternoon for a few hours between 2.00 and 6.00 on the dates in question.

FRIENDS OF GUNNERSBURY PARK AND MUSEUM

TREASURER'S REPORT : APRIL 1987 TO MARCH 1988

RECEIPTS

PAYMENTS

OPENING BALANCE
 Current a/c 324.47
 Charities Deposit a/c 744.53
 Cash i/h 16.12
 National Savings 2435.31
 = 3520.43
 DEBTOR: Cafe 1000.00

SUBSCRIPTIONS 426.50
 DONATIONS 1668.19
 = 2094.69
 FUND RAISING
 Fete 241.81
 Jumble sales etc 640.99
 Victorian Kitchens 266.79
 Stalls elsewhere 519.27
 = 1668.86
 MISCELLANEOUS 8.59

INTEREST
 Charities Deposit a/c 102.56
 National Savings 286.32
 = 388.88

ADMINISTRATION
 Newsletter 172.50
 Other printing etc 12.71
 Telephone/stamps 77.18
 Fees/donations 16.00
 = 278.39

FUND RAISING EXPENSES
 Fete 23.25
 Jumble Sales etc 86.03
 Victorian Kitchens 18.00
 Other 126.35
 = 253.63

OTHER : miscellaneous 85.71

DONATIONS: trees 800.00
 kitchens 320.00
 = 1120.00

BANK CHARGE .27

BALANCE IN HAND
 Current a/c 12.76
 Charities Deposit a/c 1147.09
 Cash i/h 15.77
 National Savings 4767.83
 = 5943.45

DEBTOR: Cafe 1000.00
 = 3681.45 = 8681.45

Signed: Andrew Brown (Hon. Treasurer) 13 June 1988

I have examined the books of THE FRIENDS OF GUNNERSBURY PARK AND MUSEUM and supporting vouchers together with Bank Statements and to the best of my knowledge and belief this is a true statement of receipts and payments for the year ended 31 March 1988.

Signed: H G Trace FCA (Hon. Auditor) 20 June 1988

Phil Philo

The Museum Curator, Phil Philo, has been appointed to run Kirkleatham Old Hall Museum in Cleveland, and will be moving north in early August.

When Phil started, Ann Balfour Paul was the Museum Curator, having not long before taken over from Bridget Goshawk. In those days (1980) the Museum did not have an Assistant Curator, but it did have a Trainee post, whose incumbent had to do all the work of an Assistant but on an even more miserable rate of pay!

Phil arrived, with Janet, having just graduated from Leicester University. For years the Museum had been treated rather like the other "attractions" in the Park - just a bit more expensive to run than the boating or the golf. But it is one of the oldest local museums in London, having been collecting for over 50 years; and it serves a population the size of Portsmouth, which has many museums; and it provides a full education service to schools; and.... and....and Phil's feet didn't touch the ground!

The good news is that today the Museum has two professional posts (Curator and Assistant), graded at reasonable salaries (for the Museum profession) and a strong sense of direction over its future. It is still bursting with unrealised potential, but looking back over the last 8 years it is good to see how far the Museum has progressed, and in that progress Phil has played his part. For that we must thank him and wish him and Janet good fortune in Cleveland.

The Stables

We thought we might have something to report - perhaps a restaurant scheme, or a set of auction rooms. But both schemes seem to have disappeared.

The Joint Committee decided to go for a commercial use to pay for the restoration and to move the Transport Collection there. They took out of the minutes the reference to office development.

If that is what they have decided, then their next step is to market the buildings in the same way as they solved the problem of the Small Mansion. Commercial use consistent with the buildings being in a public park - it's worth a try. The insurers have told them that they won't renew the policy on these buildings, so a vandal's fire could soon be the end to the saga. Why the delay?

Loos

For years the state of the loos in Gunnersbury has been a disgrace. If the loos are bad, the car parking is inadequate, the cafe is vile or the children's playground is poor then it doesn't matter how lovely the rest of the Park is, the public will go elsewhere.

Hounslow's Architects have prepared a scheme to upgrade one set of loos, and install facilities for disabled people. It will cost so much they will have to do it in next year's budget. Meanwhile, unable to bear the embarrassment of constantly directing people to some of the vilest loos in London, one of the staff in the Park has redecorated one set of loos in his own time! That is a fair measure of how bad things have got. Come on, Councillors, get this one right!

The Museum

At the Museum, the exhibition EXPLORING LIVING MEMORY runs until 31st July. You can explore West London's past through the experiences and memories of people who have lived and worked here. With lots of special events - phone the Museum on 992 1612.