

NEWSLETTER

No. 55

MAY 1999



FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Friends

The old rhyme of: *March winds and April showers bring forth May flowers* is proving true - except that we are experiencing all three together this May. Never mind, the Park and Museum are as pleasant to visit as ever. We have another article by Gillian Mobbs from Chiswick House Grounds, as well as up to date news on exciting new developments in the Park from Mike Rowan. Don't forget the Capel Manor Plant Sale and Advice Day at the College - more details below, along with other great social family events inside.

Gunnersbury Park Museum is also collecting memories from local people for their *Millennium Voices* exhibition. These will be saved for posterity, so if you'd like to contribute please don't hesitate to contact them on 0181 992 1612.

Thanks, Ed.

(Correspondence to: 14 Manor Gardens
Gunnersbury Avenue, W3 8JU)

PLANT SALE AND ADVICE DAY

In the walled garden at Capel Manor College from 11am-4pm, Saturday 29 May. Buy surplus student-grown plants

Course advice and information

Join the Tree Tour - 12 noon

Softwood Cuttings - 2.30pm

Hanging Basket Raffle - 3.30 pm

and many more exciting events!

Please call Jason Drewitt for further details on 0181 993 6266

GUNNERSBURY PARK MUSEUM

EVENTS

- *Mrs Beeton's Business*
Victorian home life as revealed by the Beetons.
Begins November 1998
- **INK TO INTERNET**
From pens to printing, modems to mobiles - an exhibition about changing forms of communication. *March onwards (1-4pm)*
- **ROTHSCHILD TOURS**
TOUR 1: 'Above Stairs' - Explore Gunnersbury Mansion and see glimpses of the building not normally open to the public

TOUR 2: 'Below Stairs' - Find out about life as a servant in original Victorian kitchens (Contact Caroline Gardner to book tours, £2 per person)
- **TOUR, CREAM TEA AND STRING QUARTET!**
For Hounslow Senior Citizens, during Hounslow's Older People's Festival
Wednesday 30 June

Teachers may be interested by the Museum's education programme and many Workshops
For more info. call Sue McAlpine or Adam Senior on 0181- 992 2247

TODDLERS PLAY CLUB

Music, Toys,
also Party Specialists!

AT THE GUNNERSBURY PARK
PAVILION RESTAURANT
During term times and between 9.30-
11.30am and 2.30-4.30 pm
week days only

It's All Going on in Gunnersbury ...

by Mike Rowan

'It's all going on in Gunnersbury' is our marketing slogan for 1999. It is intended to convey that there is something for everyone, be it a game of golf or tennis; fishing or boating on the lake followed by lunch in the Pavilion Cafe and a visit to the Museum or a stroll through the park.

However, the term is equally applicable to the implementation plan that began towards the end of 1997. Hopefully, you will have noticed many of the improvements, the new play area and the refurbished cafe to name but two.

There isn't really the space to tell you of all the things you should have noticed on your daily walk, so I will try to tell you what to keep an eye out for and also to share some of the longer term ambitions for the next 12-18 months.

The Ladies' toilet in the play area has been refurbished and a toilet for people with disabilities (accessed with a RADAR key) installed. The area has been re-landscaped and a new ramp will shortly allow this side of the park to be more accessible to people with disabilities. I am especially grateful to the Friends for their contribution to the work in this area, which has also been supported by the Gunnersbury Park Joint Committee and the Brentford Regeneration Partnership.

Keep an eye out for 10 brand new interpretative panels that will soon appear around the park. The panels have been designed to give snippets of information to those in a rush, but will build up a more complex picture of the evolving Gunnersbury Park.

The first four panels show the changing landscapes of the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, and the others depict the Small Mansion and East Lodge, Princess Amelia's Bathhouse, The Orangery, The Large Mansion, The Polo Field and The Potomac. More panels are planned to show the Japanese Garden, the Italian Garden and the Stables.

Again, I am indebted to the Friends for all the help I received in writing and designing the panels. It was truly a team effort and I hope that you enjoy learning more about Gunnersbury Park as much as I have.

In the next few weeks we will be able to return the newly-restored gates at the Main Entrance and to get rid of the horrible temporary gates that are such an eyesore. A 'paint scrape', supervised by English Heritage to discover the original colour, has revealed what we have called Gunnersbury Green (and can be seen on the Cafe and Golf Hut) but what we hadn't expected was evidence of some gilding on the centre section of the gates. We don't know if we can afford this work and anyway it can only be done once the gates are back in situ, otherwise the gold leaf would be damaged in transit. Gold or no gold, it will be great to see the gates back in their original position.

The restored gates form part of a wider package of improvements planned for the North Gardens. In the next few weeks the drive will be rearranged to make it more in proportion with the entrance gate, but also to prevent parking along the drive which is not only potentially dangerous but also completely spoils the entrance of what was once a very important estate.

To complete the look we will be planting the borders with shrubs in keeping with the 1880s and the replica lampposts will replace the hideous perspex globes.

Over the summer more research will be carried out in preparation for the recreation of the Italian Garden which is scheduled for the Autumn/Winter, together with the re-landscaping of the Temple Gardens.

Princess Amelia's Bathhouse has now had two phases of archaeology and we have been able to appoint a Conservation Architect to draw up plans for a three phase restoration of the building. Phase one will involve repairs to the roof and any works associated with the roof area with the intention of completing repairs by Nov/Dec 1999.

Phase two will involve the internal repairs to the structure and we hope to have funding for most if not all of this work. The third phase will involve the restoration of the shell work inside the grotto, but this will need further fund-raising.

I would like to tell you more about other work planned for the park but I am running out of space, so to whet your appetite I will mention the rose basket beds (about to burst into bloom) the dividing wall and the southern and western perimeters.

So, as I said at the outset, it is all going on in Gunnersbury and we are making great strides. However, one thing is certain, if we all work together the redevelopment of Gunnersbury Park will finish ahead of schedule, and we will leave a great park to contribute to the local community throughout the 21st century.

The Friends of Gunnersbury Park recently commissioned a Landscape Architect to carry out historical research into what type of planting would have been suitable for the main drive. This is the second of three instalments to appear in the Newsletter.

AN ARBORETUM AT GUNNERSBURY

The Rothschild's love of trees, and conifers in particular, is well known and this makes an arboretum a highly appropriate addition to Gunnersbury. Leopold's brother Natty was particularly fond of blue spruce which he planted at Tring, while in the park near Wiggington he created a small arboretum of fir trees. Natty's attention to aesthetic detail included keeping a flock of albino peacocks as a foil to the dark firs. Leopold himself planted blue spruce at Ascot, while his other brother Alfred carefully selected conifers for their contrasting foliage, from pale green to vivid red. This was a fashion started by the family in France but widely imitated thereafter.

An arboretum at Gunnersbury could therefore be based on coniferous trees and planted to represent latest introductions from each continent; from the Old and New Worlds, or from the Northern and Southern hemispheres. Broad leaves could also be added for seasonal colour and contrast. Any of these approaches would illustrate the expansion of knowledge in the plant world at the turn of the century.

Arboretum trees planted 'by continent', 'Old' and 'New' World or by hemisphere:

North America

Group 1

Abies bracteata: Santa Lucia Fir [stand of] *Abies concolor lowiana*, *Abies grandis*: Giant Fir.

Use to link groups: *Picea brewerana*: Brewers Weeping Spruce, *Abies magnifica*: Californian Red Fir, *Juglans californica*.

Group 2

Larix occidentalis: Western Larch, *Acer rubrum*: Red Maple, *Acer saccharinum* Sugar Maple with examples of *Acer rubrum Columnare* or *Schiessingeri*, *Acer saccharinum* 'Newton Sentry'

Central and South America

Araucaria araucana: Monkey Puzzle (stand of) *Austrocedrus chilensis*: Chilean Cedar [group of] with examples of *Eucryphia glutinosa*, *Fitzroya cupressoides*, *Pinus pungens*: Hickory Pine, *Saxegothaea conspicua*: Prince Alberts Yew.

Use to link groups: *Cupressus guadalupensis*: Tecate Cypress, *Pinus montezumae*: Montezuma Pine.

Europe

Pinus sylvestris: Scots Pine [stand of] with examples of *Abies cilicia*: Cilician Fir, *Abies alba*: European White Fir, *Abies borisii-regii*, *Fagus sylvatica*, *Dawick Picea abies*: Norway Spruce, *Picea omorika*: Serbian Spruce. Group of *Cedrus brevifolia*: Cyprian Cedar, *Quercus macranthera*, *Quercus [macedonica] trojana*: Macedonian Oak, *Taxus baccata* 'Adpressa Variegata'.

Africa

Cedrus atlantica

Asia

Cryptomeria japonica: Japanese Cedar [stand of] with *Larix kaempferi*: Japanese Larch, *Betula maximowicziana*: Monarch Birch. Planted together: *Abies veitchii*, *Picea polita*: Tiger Tail Spruce, *Pinus parvifolia*: Japanese White Pine. Use in both groups examples of *Acer rufinerve* or *A. r. f. albolimbatum*, *Acer japonicum* 'Vitifolium' *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*: Katsura Tree Liquid, *ambar formosana*

Australasia

Agathis australis: Kauri Pine [stand of]. Plant together: *Eucalyptus gunnii*: Cider Gum, *E. johnstonii*: Yellow Gum with one of each: *E. coccifera*: Mount Wellington Peppermint, *E. cordata*: Silver Gum, *E. globulus*: Tasmanian Blue Gum, *E. pauciflora*: Snow Gum.

Use to link groups: *Nothofagus fusca*: Red Beech, *N. cliffortiodes*: Mountain Beech, *Acacia baileyana*: Cootamundra Wattle.

India and Burma

Aesculus indica: Indian Horse Chestnut [group of 3 - 5]. *Magnolia campbellii*: Himalayan pink Tulip Tree [next to *Aesculus*]. Planted together: *Abies pindrow*: West Himalayan Fir, *Cedrus deodara*: *Deodar* *Picea smithiana*: West Himalayan Spruce with one of each of *Abies spectabilis*: Himalayan Fir, *Cedrus deodora* *Albospica*.

Use to link groups: *Larix griffithiana*: Himalayan Larch, *Quercus semecarpifolia*, *Sorbus cuspidata*: Himalayan Whitebeam.

The Northern hemisphere:

The scented balsams of Canada and the United States, including the Santa Lucia Fir *Abies bracteata*, and the Giant Fir *Abies grandis*, along with the Tecate Cypress *Cupressus guadalupensis*, and Montezuma Pine *Pinus montezumae* from Mexico. Then there are our native Scots Pine *Pinus sylvestris*, and other European conifers including the Cilician Fir *Abies cilicia*, and Serbian Spruce *Picea omorika*.

The majority of introductions at the end of the nineteenth century were from Asia and in particular Japan and China. A stand of Japanese Cedar *Cryptomeria japonica*, could be interspersed with Japanese Larch *Larix kaempferi*.

The Southern Hemisphere: A stand of Monkey Puzzle *Araucaria araucana*, or Chilean Cedar *Austrocedrus chilensis*, could mark South America, while the exotic Kauri Pine *Agathis australis*, could represent Australasia. A group of the stately African *Cedrus atlantica* would be a good contrast to the conifers of India & Burma, such as the West Himalayan Fir *Abies pindrow*, the West Himalayan Spruce *Picea smithiana* and the Himalayan Larch *Larix griffithiana*.

G L Mobbs (01.02.99)