

NEWSLETTER

No. 56

AUGUST 1999



FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Friends

What an auspicious month! This August includes not only the famous Bank Holiday, but also the first full eclipse since around the time Gunnersbury Park was first opened to the public. This month also begins the lead-up to the Millennium – just in case you hadn't noticed. There are rumours of a Millennium party taking place in the Park... Let's hope Gunnersbury Park and Museum last well into the next thousand years and continue to give us as much pleasure.

Visitors to the Park have a laudable thirst for knowledge; we have had a very positive response to the attractive new Park Information Panels.

Another exciting happening is that we have been sent a plaque by the Poetry Society which has been erected on a poetry board in the Park. They may also award us Poet in Residence! Copies of the 'Park' poem -available from the North Lodge - are proving very popular.

There will be an opportunity to join the special tour of the Museum on Heritage Open Day – a time when hundreds of buildings normally closed to the public will open their doors. You will be able to glimpse intriguing areas of the house not usually on display.

There's no longer any need to travel all the way to Kenwood to enjoy evening concerts – come and listen to the Philharmonic Orchestra in the Park on 3, 4 or 5 September. Book now to avoid disappointment. See inside for other exciting events.

Thanks to you all for your helpful correspondence.
Ed.



Join the Circus
of events at
Gunnersbury
Park Museum

*There is an exciting program
of events and exhibitions
for children and adults.*

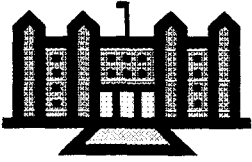
*Join our mailing list!
We have something
for everyone.*

*DON'T MISS OUT...
send to:
Gunnersbury Park Museum
Gunnersbury Park
London W3 8LQ
0181 992 1612*



NEWSLETTER QUARTERLY ISSUES:

February	Spring Lecture details
May	Summer Gala details
August	September Fete details
November	Christmas event details



GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM EVENTS

- **Ink to Internet**
From pens to printing, modems to mobiles - an exhibition about changing forms of communication. *Until September (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)

- **FOR CHILDREN:**
Brer Rabbitt
Jeremy Allan presents three funny tales of merriment and mischief that will amuse children of all ages. All the stories combine acting, storytelling, original songs and colourful characters. Free
Sunday 22 August (3pm)

- ***Gunnersbury Park Event***
This is held as normal on the first Sunday of September. We hope you will come and support us and other local charities, while enjoying the usual fun at the same time.

- **Heritage Open Day**
Discover more about the history of Gunnersbury Mansion as a home to the Rothschild family on Sunday 12 September. Cost: free, but numbers are limited so please book to avoid disappointment
*For more information please call 0181 992 1612
or E-mail: gp-museum@cip.org.uk.*

- **WINTER WARMER – HALLOWEEN SPECIAL**
Meet the Victorian servants: the laundry maid, cook and butler. Children can dress up and experience 'real' life below stairs, as well as join in with Halloween celebrations, apple bobbing and other traditional games. Come in Halloween costume and win a prize!
Cost: donations only!
Gunnersbury Park Museum Victorian kitchens. Museum open 1-6pm, shows at 1.30pm, 3pm and 4.30pm. For more information pl. call 0181 992 1612

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*

INTERVIEW WITH A PARK PERSON

This Quarter it's with...

Vanda Foster, Deputy Curator of the Museum

Vanda worked as Senior Assistant Keeper at the Museum of London Costume Department, during the time of *the* Royal Wedding.

She says: 'One wonderful day the Emmanuels came to get ideas as we had an exhibition of Royal Wedding dresses to coincide with the event. Selina Scott, who then was the equivalent of Anthea Turner now, interviewed them. A Japanese film crew then turned up to interview Selina!'

Vanda is multi-talented; a graduate in English and Art History from Leeds University, she then worked in various jobs - including being a Trainee Buyer at Harrods - while she tried to find the right way into the museum world. Studying a Museum Studies Diploma at Manchester University did the trick, enabling Vanda to work at the Gallery of Costume in Rusholme, Manchester. She became Curator, remaining there for five years.

Vanda explains: 'I then retired to have children, in the event a boy and a girl. I worked part-time on different projects, such as the Russian Costume Exhibition at the Barbican Art Gallery. I also performed freelance work for Pitshanger Manor, Ealing, for several years in the 80s and 90s, and worked for charities including a Helpline for concert performers needing medical care.'

Many coincidences become apparent, linking Vanda to Gunnersbury. She says: 'I was a student at West Thames College doing a practical Fine Art course, and Joan Catterall came to lecture as an 'old girl'. I missed museums, and came to Gunnersbury Museum as a volunteer to work for Sarah Levitt - she had been my volunteer in Manchester. I was promoted to Collections Officer, working three days a week while I continued to work at Pitshanger for the other two. I took my present position in September 1998 - and recently discovered I am related to the Treasurer!'

Vanda is actually a local to this area. She says: 'My father lived at 105 Gunnersbury Avenue when young and regularly walked in the park, before moving to Chiswick.'

She sounds very happy to be back on home ground.





Princess Amelia's Bath House



The renovation of Princess Amelia's Bath House is part of the first phase of the Heritage Lottery Fund bid for the park.

The work started in June when archeologists started their survey work. The resulting report has come up with the following information about the structure and history of the Bath House. Further archeological work may be necessary as this current survey has thrown up as many questions as it has answered.

1750 - 1786

Analysis of the existing fabric indicates that it was built around 1750 and consisted of a single space with rendered walls and Grotto Cascade (thought to have been dry, it could have been lined with coloured shells. Ferns and moss would have grown on it and there may have been a statue of a water nymph). It is therefore likely that the bath house was in place prior to Princess Amelia's death in 1786. This confirms the long held assumption that the Bath House was built for Princess Amelia.

1786 - 1806

The garden terrace to the east of the Bath House was established and includes the classical arch to the south. The internal walls of the Bath House grotto were lined with flints and there is reference in 1804 to the lining of the bath in tiles.

1806-1850's

Within the Bath House a flint screen was built dividing the former larger bath area into two distinct spaces, the grotto bath and a vestibule (*an*

entrance hall or lobby). An external canted bay was also built and it was likely that french windows were added. The outside of the Bath House was gothicised with the walls rendered and parapets and small turreted spires added. Documentary evidence refers to the bath as being cold. It may have been filled and topped up manually. The water tower and gothic screen which connects it to the bath house were erected around this time the assumption that the water tower fed the Bath House seems to be wrong as no evidence could be found to confirm this theory.

1850's - present

The building was refurbished in the 1880's, with the existing doors and internal canted bay added. Buttresses were added to the outside of the building which may have been necessitated by structural deterioration. The Bath House slowly deteriorated from the time it came into public ownership in 1925 with some restoration work being carried out in the 1950's which included re-roofing the Bath house.

Further Investigations

The current report recommends three further key areas of investigation these are:

1. That the lining of the bath be removed in a trench laid out against the cascade wall so as to investigate evidence for earlier lining and the supply and management of water within the bath.
2. That a trial pit be excavated within the chamber to examine evidence for earlier floors.
3. That all loose debris be salvaged and overgrowth removed from the grotto garden to allow detailed survey including an examination of evidence for water supply.

The Information Centre is open daily from 8.00am.
Telephone 0181 993 3508.

***This is just one of the
interesting leaflets
available
from the North Lodge
Information Centre ...***

The Art & Archaeology of the English House and Garden

*An adult education course run by
Birkbeck College at
Gunnersbury Park Museum.*

Much more than a stroll through
stately homes and gardens.
Find out about the architectural and
archaeological heritage around you. From
Roman villas to medieval villages, castles,
slums and suburbs.

Based in the 19th century mansion house of
Gunnersbury Park Museum the course is
illustrated by films and slides and includes visits.
Taught by Cathy Mercer MA.

Dates: Every Wednesday for two 10 week terms.
Starts 15. 9.1999
Times: 2.30pm - 4.30pm
Venue: Gunnersbury Park Museum, London W3
Location: Tube - Acton Town, Bus E3
Road - off North Circular
Contact: Julia Shelley 0181 992 2247
Fees: £87 full £44 concession