

• FRIENDS EVENTS • FRIENDS EVENTS • FRIENDS EVENTS •

13 July 2002

11am-3.00pm in the Walled Garden (entrance from car park area)

GARDENERS' QUESTION TIME

A chance to get your soil tested, to ask for gardening advice or have your plants (and pests!) identified. Jason Drewitt of Capel Manor College is putting on this special event at 50p a question, to raise funds for the Friends.

23 July 2002

7.15 - 9.30pm at the Museum

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

A sociable evening, with light refreshments from 7.15. Our meeting will start at 7.45pm with a short briefing from Jill Draper, who is in charge of Gunnersbury. The business meeting will follow at 8pm and the evening will end with an illustrated talk.

Our speaker is Val Bott, newsletter editor, who will talk about *The Brentford Flood*, a disaster which hit Brentford in January 1841. It is an exciting story and she will describe what happened that night and how people coped with the aftermath of flooded homes, sunken boats and crowds of sightseers. While the parish authorities cared for the victims and raised funds to compensate them, inquests revealed an unexpected cause which contributed to the disaster.

Val's new book *Flood! the Brentford flood of 1841*, published by the Brentford & Chiswick Local History Society, is on sale at £7.95, at the Museum, at Brentford and Chiswick public libraries and at the Public Record Office bookshop in Kew. Copies can also be ordered by post for £8.75 from the Society at 25 Hartington Road, London W4 3TL.

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THE QUEEN'S VISIT TO GUNNERSBURY PARK

As part of the Jubilee celebrations the Queen visited Gunnersbury on 25 June. A number of local organisations sent representatives - 200 were invited from each of four boroughs - to have a picnic lunch in marquees on the lawn while the Queen ate with a selected group in the Large Mansion.

Schoolchildren gathered on the front lawn to welcome her and crowds lined the path between the mansions to see her when she walked through the Park after lunch.

Flowers for the interior, including dramatic centrepieces for the tables in the Dining Room, were prepared by Capel Manor College and boxes of brightly-coloured flowers were provided by Greenscene (which operates from the Park) all along the Terrace and at the front of the Museum.

Overleaf Joan Catterall, the Friends' membership secretary who now works part-time at the Museum, gives her own account of the Jubilee lunch.

JAPANESE GARDENS

Interest in the restoration plans for the Japanese garden at Gunnersbury Park are growing daily with many enquiries locally and abroad as well as visitors to the site.

Most recently we had a visit from a distinguished Japanese garden designer Mr Masayuki Ogawara, who is responsible for the famous gardens of the Urasenke Tea Ceremony Foundation in Kyoto. He was in Ealing to work on the zen garden at the Three Wheel Temple in Carbery Avenue, and gave his time to visit Gunnersbury, identifying at least twenty trees and plants that are uniquely Japanese in origin.

Most notable was the Japanese Pagoda tree (*L. sophora japonica* / *J. shidare enju*). This forms a centrepiece to the garden with its impressive neighbour the Japanese Emperor oak (*L. quercus dentata* / *J. kashinoki*), identifiable by its enormous leaves that are used in Japan for wrapping sweet rice cakes (*J. kashiwamochi*). Mr Ogawara said that even in Japan the Pagoda tree is difficult to cultivate so to find such a fine example here in London was a surprise for him.

He expressed his admiration for the vision of the Victorian gardener, James Hudson, whose determination and love of oriental planting made the Gunnersbury Japanese garden such a fine example of its kind.

The horticultural uniqueness of the Japanese-style garden at Gunnersbury is becoming more and more apparent, but of further interest is the link to the culture that each plant offers.

For example, Japanese torreyia (*J. Kaya*) is used for Japanese chess tables, and yachiku (bamboo) has been used since ancient times to make the finest ceremonial arrows.

Plants are part of our lives and the Japanese garden at Gunnersbury will be a wonderful educational resource to teach people about the culture of Japan. We hope that it will have the support that it deserves.

Liam O'Brien and Phillida Purvis

LUNCH WITH THE QUEEN . . .

I am so excited - WOW - Why? Because I have been invited to have lunch with the Queen of England!!!!!! Where? At Gunnersbury Park. When I opened the letter asking me to say if I would like to come, I was breathless!!!! Hugged Jill Draper, who had given me the letter, wow, then rang husband at work.

"Lunch with who? WHO?" Rang daughter, "MUM!!!! Wow, what will you wear? We'll shop on Sunday!" Sent back acceptance and as requested have given date of birth, eek!

Sunday: Have just been out and bought the most expensive item of clothing I have ever had in my life!!! It is fantastic and I look good in it, we think it is certainly fit to wear to have lunch with the Queen. Can't stop smiling, the thought of it warms me all through.

25th June: Woke at 6, showered, leisurely breakfast, husband cleans car. Have been given strict instructions to relax and get ready half hour max before leaving house.

10.15 Put on new acorn brown suit, green blouse, new bag and shoes, mirror says I look good, husband says same.

10.40 Leave house, get in car, husband has put clean sheet over back seat to ensure get no marks on suit.

10.50 Arrive at Gunnersbury, which looks fabulous, like something out of the deep South, flower boxes on window sills, paintwork shining in the sun, white picket fence around grass edge. Police on gate inspect invitation and badge. Allowed in and start walking down drive - am met by a clown, dressed in yellow, on stilts and pushing a scooter, "get on madam I'll wheel you to the Museum". Did so, see museum staff at entrance, unperturbed by my method of arrival.

Go into museum and am directed through to terrace via Dining Room. Flowers everywhere - in the Museum entrance hall and in boxes along the terrace wall - looks wonderful. I am on table five and am asked to sign visitors' book. Waitress offers me champagne and canapés. Meet and talk to lots of people including Mr Edmund de Rothschild and his wife, see Bill (museum colleague also at the lunch) and Cllr Smart and they also talk to them.

On the grass, marquees and tents have been set up and people are arriving for the picnic. There is dancing, music is playing and children sing, the sun shines all day - it is wonderful.

Then we are told that the Queen has arrived and asked to make our way to the Dining Room. It looks lovely, tables set with white cloths and silver cutlery and flowers in the centre, wonderful flower arrangement on mantelpiece, gold chairs with gold velvet covers. On each chair is a booklet headed *Golden Jubilee Souvenir Programme*, a pleasant memento for us all. Stand by my chair and, look round, noticing I am not only one easing feet in obviously new shoes!

The Queen is at the doors she steps in room, stops and smiles a very warm smile. She wears a golden yellow two piece with tiny white spots, her hat and gloves in the same colour, with white bag gloves and shoes. The Duke follows her in, and they make their way to their tables. After she is seated, we stand and drink the loyal toast "The Queen", then we sit down to eat.

What was for lunch? Vegetable terrine (layers of carrot, celeriac and broccoli mousse) with tomato coulis, salmon steak

in a light herb sauce, ratatouille and salade niçoise, with small bread rolls. Opera gateau - layers of coffee and chocolate with gold leaf - and sauce anglaise followed. We drank sparkling white wine and finished with coffee. A delicious meal and excellent company!

After coffee the Queen rose and we stood while she and the Duke left with her protector, assistant secretary and staff. We went out soon afterwards and saw them meeting people at the picnic. I went down to where their car stood and saw them wave as they drove away.

Later met up with friends and we talked about the day. All agreed it had been good. We all got a lift back in the buggy to the main car park, then caught the bus home. People at the bus stop were saying what a wonderful day it had been.

Still felt on cloud nine, it had been one of the most fantastic days of my life and one that I shall never forget as long as I live. Everyone seemed so happy that the Queen was there and had visited Gunnersbury. Brilliant.

Joan Catterall

THE ROTHSCHILDS AT GUNNERSBURY

Our April talk was a great success with an audience of nearly 40 people. Melanie Aspey, the Rothschild archivist for the last 8 years, is a lively and knowledgeable speaker.

The archive of the NM Rothschild bank, which has been at the same address, New Court in the City, for about 200 years, was transferred in 1999 to a new family trust. Its holdings now include much family material and papers relating to the vineyards as well as the banking archives. About half its users are economic historians and about half family historians.

Using slides of the collection, including family portraits which once hung in the Large Mansion, Melanie took us through the complicated story of family connections with Gunnersbury. It is complex first because of the repeated use of the same forenames in successive generations and secondly because many members of this family married their cousins. Indeed one late 19th century Rothschild had only one great-grandfather. Recently papers taken by the Nazis have been returned by the Russian government, the first ever return of such records to a non-governmental agency. We were amazed to be shown a certificate relating to a 1920s racehorse called Gunnersbury found amongst this batch of archives!

A full account of the family's Gunnersbury connections will appear in the *Brentford & Chiswick Local History Journal 11*, due out soon. It is worth mentioning here, however, that new additions to the archive are being made all the time as the family transfers papers and photos to its collections for safekeeping. These include sales particulars of Gunnersbury when Nathan Meyer Rothschild bought it in the 1830s and inventories of the contents of their houses at various dates.

LONDON OPEN HOUSE DAYS 22 September

Gunnersbury's contribution to this annual event will provide tours behind the scenes at the Museum (the Large Mansion) and the Bath-House and the Temple will be open to visitors on this afternoon. We still need volunteers to help act as stewards on this day - please contact the Editor if you would be interested in helping. We will provide a training session in advance and information sheets to hand out to visitors.

GUNNERSBURY PARK JOINT COMMITTEE

The first meeting of the committee after the local elections was held on 21 June. Cllr Corinna Smart (LB Hounslow) was elected chair and Cllr Yvonne Johnson (LB Ealing) vice-chair.

Recent reforms to local government have transferred power from ordinary councillors to a smaller number of "executive" or "cabinet" councillors, and they now make the formal decisions. One of the major discussions at the meeting was what role this joint management committee should have if the real power is held by two or three councillors each in Ealing and Hounslow.

Each borough has divided its portfolio of responsibilities differently, so the opportunities for confusion have increased. The creation of area committees (Gunnersbury is within the Brentford and Isleworth committee area of LB Hounslow) adds another layer of possible confusion. If ever a real dispute breaks out it is likely to be very hard to resolve, and it is now even more important to maintain cooperation and trust between both boroughs' councillors and officers.

The story of the Playstation Event has revealed just how complicated the future might be. LB Hounslow has transferred its Leisure Services department to CIP, (Community Initiative Partnerships), a private not-for-profit charitable company. CIP has an ambitious chief executive and its Events section has a financial target to meet. When 2Converge pro-posed its Playstation Event, it offered £25,000 to the Joint Committee. But it has since emerged that CIP were going to charge a further £35,000 for the use of the Park - despite direct questioning, this was not revealed at meetings of the Joint Committee.

When the whole business of the access roads and the impact on Lionel Primary School blew up, CIP deployed a more senior management team, but by now no-one had confidence that this was going to be a well-managed event.

For an event on the scale they wanted, 2Converge were very late in making their application and we could find no evidence that, as a company, they had managed this sort of thing before, or that they had the

the financial backing that they needed. For example, it appears that they have not paid the £15,000 they promised the GPJC as a non-refundable deposit.

In April 2Converge postponed their event, and at their June meeting the GPJC rejected the proposal that it be held in 2003.

While this was going on, the invitation to register an interest in the restoration of the Stables was being published in the Official Journal of the European Communities. Because the budget for this work is likely to be greater than £3.861m it must be offered to contractors and architects across Europe. The closing date is 12 July, so we are expecting an interesting report at the next meeting of the GPJC.

MUSEUM CONSULTATION

In the April Newsletter we asked what Friends thought about a suggestion which came out of the consultations meetings on the future of the Museum. This was that the name of the Museum might need to be changed. Well, we have been inundated with your letters - two in all - and both were firmly against the suggestion.

FRIENDS' MEMBERSHIP DETAILS

If you are already a Friend, why not encourage someone else to join? If you are not, do sign up and join our mailing list to receive the Newsletter regularly. The subscription, at £3, is very modest - but the more members we have the better the income! In addition, a bigger membership gives the group a stronger voice. Subscriptions for 2002/3 became due on 1 April 2002 - please make sure you have paid. The Membership Secretary is Joan Catterall, 39 Lionel Road, Brentford, Middlesex TW8 9QZ.

To contact Val Bott, Newsletter Editor, please write to 25 Hartington Road, Chiswick, London W4 3TL

The Friends of Gunnersbury Park & Museum is a Registered Charity no 286310

AT THE MUSEUM

CHILDREN'S HOLIDAY WORKSHOPS

A 5-day history and drama course based on Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 29 July-2 August, 10-4 daily. The 25 places for 8 to 13 year olds must be booked in advance. The cost is £75 with a £15 non-returnable deposit.

Participants will learn about the Tudors and Shakespeare, see costumes and objects used then. The project will culminate in a performance for family and friends.

EXHIBITIONS NOW ON

Window Shopping

Shopping in Ealing and Hounslow 1880-1930, with photos and objects from the local history libraries as well as the Museum's own collections.

Second Skin

From silkworms to lycra, an exhibition about the materials our clothes are made from.

Never had it so good? - Flashbacks to the Fifties

An exhibition to mark the Queen's Jubilee *until 6 October*.

The Japanese in Britain

A travelling exhibition of family photographs showing the history of the Japanese living in Britain from 1860 to the present day

Kumbh Mela from 1 October

Photographs by Peter Spenceley showing images and scenes from the great festival in India

The Victorian Kitchens

See behind the scenes in the Large Mansion. The Rothschilds' kitchens are open weekends April -Nov, 1-6pm.

MUSEUM OPENING HOURS

November to March, daily (including Bank Hols) 1-4pm

April to October, weekdays 1-5pm, weekends, Bank Hols 1-6pm

☎ 020 8992 1612 ADMISSION FREE

MUSEUM COURSES

Two new Birkbeck College courses will begin at the Museum on 18 September. Each lasts 20 weeks over two terms and costs £108 (£54 concessions).

FROM HOUSE TO PARK:

Gunnersbury Park Between the Wars

Tutor: Patricia Melville, 10-30am-12.30pm Wednesdays

THE CELTIC WORLD:

The Iron Age in Europe and Britain

Tutor: J Scott McCracken, 2.30-4.30pm Wednesdays

To reserve a place contact the museum on ☎ 020 8992 2247 or 8992 1612, by fax on 020 8752 0686 or by email gp-museum@cip.org.uk