

# NEWSLETTER

• FRIENDS EVENTS • FRIENDS EVENTS • FRIENDS EVENTS •

Our successful programme of talks continues. Each evening begins with light refreshments from 7.15pm. Please arrive before the talk starts at 7.45pm, as it is not always easy to hear the museum doorbell once the talk is underway.

**15 October 2002 7.15 - 9.30pm at the Museum**

## ***DEBUTANTES by Elfie Eden Fallowfield***

The Queen's visit to Gunnersbury and the Museum's exhibition about the Fifties (closing on October 6) have marked our Golden Jubilee year. But we are offering our own very unusual talk by Elfie Eden Fallowfield, who was amongst the last group of "debs" to be presented. The debutante is now an extinct species, but originated in the early 17th century and was last in evidence in 1958; a newer version survived until 1994. The ceremony saw young ladies of the nobility being presented at court before "coming out" into society. Elfie now runs the Madame Vacani School of Dance, where the debs learnt the all-important curtsy. Come along and you too can learn this essential social skill!

**5 December 2002 7.15-9.30pm at the Museum**

## ***THE TALE OF THE TOILET by Terry Woolliscroft***

Terry Woolliscroft is the company historian for Twyford Bathrooms in Staffordshire; he has been actively involved in the Friends of Gladstone Pottery Museum and the Friends of the City Museum and Art Gallery in Stoke-on-Trent. Terry is an extremely entertaining speaker and brings us a subject which must surely be of interest to everyone! His talk will trace the development of the toilet, which revolutionised the standard of living in the UK and did more to improve the nation's health than any pills or potions. The talk will also include some recently discovered film of the Twyford works.

Tickets for both events can be purchased in advance at £5.00 each at the Museum and by post (send a cheque to the *Friends of Gunnersbury Park & Museum* with SAE to 25 Hartington Road, London W4 3TL) or pay at the door.

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## **LONDON OPEN HOUSE DAY**

**at Gunnersbury 22 Sept**

This annual event provides an opportunity for visitors to follow an architectural trail at the Large Mansion (the Museum), to see inside the Bath-House and the Temple and to visit part of the Walled Garden (part of Capel Manor College at Gunnersbury). A small group of Friends volunteers we will be helping on the day. We hope that lots of you will come to enjoy this chance to see "behind the scenes". Information sheets about the buildings will be available on the day.

There is car parking inside the Park accessible from Popes Lane; this is opposite the gate in the wall leading to Capel Manor College. You can obtain teas in the Park café. To obtain full details of all the buildings in London open that weekend, look for the brochure in public libraries or explore their web-site on [www.londonopen-house.org.uk](http://www.londonopen-house.org.uk). Admission is free.

## FROM THE EDITOR

This Newsletter is appearing a few weeks earlier than planned in order to make sure you have details of the Open House days and plenty of notice of our forthcoming talks in October and December.

Our last issue was popular with the *Brentford Chiswick and Isleworth Times* which used large extracts in its pages (without giving the source) over several weeks!

The next issue will be sent out in January 2003 with a new programme of activities. Although it is rather early, we have to send our best wishes for the New Year now!

## OTHER FRIENDS

A new group is being established to support Boston Manor House & Grounds a short distance from Gunnersbury in Brentford. The first meeting took place in early September and attracted a good turnout.

Like Gunnersbury, this Park is managed by CIP, the charitable company which runs L B Hounslow's Leisure Services.

The House has limited opening hours at weekends and is in urgent need of some repair work but is worth a visit.

Phone the Parks Development Manager on 020 8894 2677 if you want to get involved.

## ROTHSCHILD'S

Melanie Aspey, the Rothschild's Archivist, gave us an excellent talk in the spring. Now she has written a very good article, based upon her talk, for the *Brentford & Chiswick Local History Journal no 11*, which has just been published. It will shortly be on sale in Brentford and Chiswick Libraries and at the Museum, at £3.50 a copy.

Find out more about the family, including many portraits, and about the archive, on the excellent web-site: [www.rothschildarchive.org](http://www.rothschildarchive.org).

## GENEROUS DONATION TO FRIENDS' FUNDS FROM LOCAL COMMUNITY GROUP

The Southfield Community Association (SCA) has sent the Friends of Gunnersbury Park a gift of £1,500. We are delighted to have such a generous donation but it is sad that this has come about because the Association is having to wind itself up.

The SCA has long supported our events at Gunnersbury. Since 1982 the Association had rented the Methodist Church in Steele Road, Acton Green. However, this has been severely damaged in an arson attack and the Methodist Church has now decided to sell the site. As a result the Association has decided to close down and in disposing of their remaining assets has made this donation to the Friends.

Our Chairman, James Wisdom, wrote formally to thank the SCA chairman, Joan Walker, saying how sorry he was to hear of the closure of the Association and thanking them for supporting our events over so many years.

## GUNNERSBURY PARK JOINT COMMITTEE

At the AGM the committee was asked for information about the Joint Committee which runs Gunnersbury Park.

The Committee is made up of 6 Councillors each from LB Ealing and LB Hounslow, representing the joint owners of the Park and Museum. The Friends may nominate two representatives to attend and speak at meetings, though we do not have any voting rights.

The Committee meets four times a year, usually in the Small Mansion at Gunnersbury. The meetings are open to the general public except for discussion of items which are commercially sensitive or which relate to personnel matters.

The Committee's role will be changing slightly as a result of changes in the structure of the councils of Ealing and Hounslow which has shifted power to a small "cabinet" of executive councillors. However, the GPJC is fortunate this year to be chaired by a Hounslow executive member, Councillor Corinna Smart, who also chairs the Brentford Area Committee.

The next two meetings are on 27 Sept and 6 Dec at 6.30pm.

## CAPEL MANOR STUDENTS' SUCCESS

Former students of Capel Manor College at Gunnersbury were medal winners at the Royal Horticultural Society Flower Shows.

At Chelsea, Alison Wear, a recent Capel student, won a Gold Medal in the "chic gardens" category, with Kelly's Creek, an Australian-inspired garden based on aboriginal art and design. The category is for gardens incorporating new ideas and modern materials for an urban environment. "Wild Things", a roof top garden designed by Hilary Neiland and constructed with the help of other Capel students from Gunnersbury, won a Bronze Medal in the courtyard gardens category.

Recruitment for the courses starting in the autumn has been very busy, underlining the success of the College. Work on the new facilities at Gunnersbury will continue during the autumn and some courses will not begin until these are available.

## THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2002

The Annual General Meeting was held in the Museum on 23 July. It was preceded by a short account by Jill Draper of her work in the Museum and Park at Gunnersbury and followed by a slide talk by Val Bott on the 1841 Brentford Flood.

The officers reported on a positive year and healthy finances. There had been a significant increase in subscriptions and donations to the Friends and the talks and events programme had earned additional income to supplement our funds. Our auditor, Chris Dakers, was re-appointed and thanked for his work on our behalf. All but one of the committee members had indicated that they wished to continue in their roles and were re-elected. They are Linda Bery, Val Bott, John Brazier, Joan Catterall, Anne Hobson, Sonya Leydecker, Liam O'Brien, Helen Poskitt, Renee Tyack and James Wisdom.

The meeting ended with thanks from the Chairman, James Wisdom, to everyone for their support during 2001/2.

## CAN YOU SEW?

Due to the continued popular demand for schools visits to the Victorian Kitchens at Gunnersbury the museum education staff have asked for our help. Is there a Friend (or even a friend of a Friend!) who would like to make some child-sized garments?

Aprons, caps and waistcoats are needed to dress up children who come to the Kitchens. For rates and further details please contact either Clare Oliphant or Julia Shelley on the museum education phone number which is 020-992 2247. We hope someone out there can help!

## PULHAMITE STONE

We recently received a query from a researcher investigating "Pulhamite stone". The following extracts from *Into the 21st Century*, the report prepared as part of the Park's successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, provide details about the use of Pulhamite at Gunnersbury Park.

"In 1861 Baron Lionel de Rothschild extended Gunnersbury Park by 331 acres with the acquisition of land from the Bishop of London. In the furthest south-west corner of the newly-enlarged estate was a huge former clay pit called Cole's Hole beside which sat a disused tile kiln. Lionel de Rothschild adapted Cole's Hole to form a picturesque boating lake, which he re-named Potomac Pond, and the old tile kiln was then cleverly converted to a tower-cum-boathouse folly.

The Boathouse is an extremely handsome octagonal tower mounted above a square basement, the whole being ornamental in a rather serious and studied gothick style characteristic of the later 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Baron de Rothschild called in J W Pulham to advise on the creation of the Potomac Pond and the Boathouse. Pulham, from a family of gardeners-cum-architects, had developed a type of artificial stone which he patented under the name Pulhamite.

The landscaped rockwork surrounding the Potomac and particularly around the arched boat inlet and balustrade, is made of this very hard-wearing material, which seems to be a type of dense terracotta. The Boathouse has a variety of gothick Pulhamite stone dressings and embellishments, both inside and out.

A drawing by Pulham exists in the Rothschild archives showing an alternative design for the Boathouse. It suggests that a low-slung Chinese Pavilion was considered instead of the gothick tower; as drawn this would not have incorporated the tile kiln. The present building's longevity is due to the robust

structure that the old kiln offers as a base.

Though somewhat derelict, the Boathouse remains remarkably unaltered; structurally it is as solid as it has ever been. Markings in the external brickwork show it was once rendered; a fragment of the original render still remains.

The Boathouse has three floors, the lowest being at the level of the Potomac Pond and featuring the grotto-like arched inlet for a single pleasure boat. A narrow newel staircase extends sharply from here, up through the sombre vaulted ground floor chamber to emerge into the light and spacious upper gallery.

The Tower itself at one time functioned as a bell tower. The upper gallery would have been an observation room from which could be seen the picturesque surroundings of the Potomac Pond. The bell, previously housed within the structure of the tall gothick parapet, was presumably used to alert the distant household staff that the members of the boating party were preparing to return to the main house."

## JUBILEE PICTURES

Those of you who missed the Queen's visit to Gunnersbury, and even some of those who were there, may be interested to know that a number of pictures were taken by photographer Simon Pope for Hounslow Council.

Over a hundred and twenty images of the day are on the Council's website at [www.hounslow.gov.uk/jubilee-visit](http://www.hounslow.gov.uk/jubilee-visit). They appear as postage stamp sized images which can be enlarged for viewing on the computer screen.

Many show the crowds being entertained in the Park, and the Queen's short walk amongst them, but the royal lunch inside the Museum is not included. Prince Philip is shown with the Rothschild carriages, a personal interest of his. And there are lots of pictures of Mayors in their chains of office!

Each photo has its own code number so you can order a copy. (A 7"x5" print is £8). Full details are given of how to place an order, including the photographer's address.

## 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

## MUSEUM 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 *until 23 September*

### 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 and Bank Holidays 1-6pm ☎ 020 8992 1612 **ADMISSION FREE**

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## MUSEUM COURSES

Two new Birkbeck College courses 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 phone the museum on ☎ 020 8992 2247 or 8992 1612, fax on 020 8752 0686 or email them on [gp-museum@cip.org.uk](mailto:gp-museum@cip.org.uk)