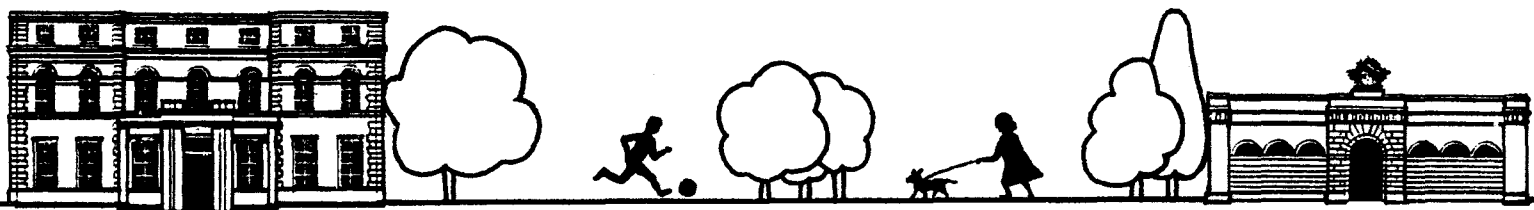


# FRIENDS of GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

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# NEWSLETTER



## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

We will be holding the second Annual General Meeting of the Friends in the Temple in Gunnersbury Park on Sunday 24th April at 3.00pm. The main business of the meeting will be to receive the reports on the year's activities from the Executive Committee, to elect the Executive Committee for this coming year, to discuss any points members wish to raise and to consider our reactions to the two major items in this Newsletter - the GPJC Working Party's Report and the proposal for an Architectural Competition. When the business has finished, we hope to be able to take Friends into the Kitchens of the Large Mansion to examine the progress of the restoration work.

The Constitution requires the members of the Executive Committee to stand down and offer themselves for re-election and nomination for the Executive Committee is open to all members of the society. Written nominations, duly seconded, should be in the hands of the Hon. Secretary by the beginning of the AGM. We hope to start promptly at 3.00pm and the Temple will be opened at 2.30pm.

## Working Party Report

New members start here: Over the winter of 1981/2 we held meetings with our members about the future of the buildings in the Park and we reported our views to the councils' officers on March 5th and to the Joint Committee on April 23rd. (see Newsletter 3)

The Council elections in May 1982 left the composition of both councils unchanged.

Then soon after the elections we heard that the Chief Executive of L. B. Hounslow, Roger Jefferies, thought it would be nice to have an Art Gallery in the Small Mansion and the officers started work on this plan. (see Newsletter 4)

This work was so extensive that the Gunnersbury Park Joint Committee meeting of July 1982 was postponed until September.

We were invited for further consultations in July 1982 and heard that a council working party would prepare schemes for involving private capital in the restoration of the Park. We agreed to submit their plans to the widest public consultation. (see Newsletter 5)

The Working Party has now reported (March 1983) and we have printed the report verbatim below. We would be interested to hear the opinions of our members at the AGM on April 24th, or by letter if you cannot attend.

### GUNNERSBURY PARK LISTED BUILDINGS

### REPORT OF WORKING PARTY

#### 1. COMPOSITION OF WORKING PARTY & OBJECTIVES

The Working Party consisted of Officers from the London Borough of Hounslow together with a representation from the London Borough of Ealing. Its brief was to consider ways of achieving the renovation of the various listed buildings in the Park and appropriate uses to which they could be put, following repair and restoration, together with associated horticultural and landscaping improvements to achieve a major uplift in the character of the park as a whole.

## 2. BUILDINGS INVOLVED

The buildings requiring renovation works are: (a) The Orangery, (b) East Lodge, (c) Princess Amelia's Bath House, (d) The Gothic Boat House and (e) The Stables. The Large and Small Mansions and the Temple are not in need of substantial renovation works apart from normal maintenance.

## 3. USES CONSIDERED AND INITIAL COMMENTS

### (a) The Orangery

- i. Use as a restaurant/tea room This would be very small and in consequence not likely to be viable in financial terms and, of course, would compete to some extent with the existing Refreshment Room.
- ii. An Aviary This use was considered and agreed by the Gunnersbury Park Committee in 1975. The building would be suitable structurally although some extension would be required.
- iii. Amenity Area A more modest restoration, with renovation of gardens/horse-shoe pond would provide an attractive amenity area.

### (b) East Lodge

Its use is felt to be limited but this could be used to provide boat storage.

### (c) Princess Amelia's Bath House

No practical use felt to be possible. Retention as "a folly".

### (d) The Gothic Boat House

Any extensive use is limited by the small size of the building but possible use as a kiosk.

### (e) The Stables

- i. Restaurant Use It is unlikely that planning consent would be given in this type of use due to the traffic access necessary into Gunnersbury Avenue.
- ii. Riding School A scheme has been considered for the use of the property on a commercial basis as a riding school, provided the organizer was successful in obtaining the necessary funding. There would seem to be a possibility of such a use being self-supporting although some concern is felt as to the ability to achieving the amount of use suggested. A substantial guarantor would, no doubt, be required if the scheme is to attract suitable funding. In the current financial circumstances, either Council might find some difficulty in filling this role.  
The use would involve the provision of a large probably temporary, building for indoor riding school use and this obviously would have to be studied carefully in planning terms, having regard to its impact on the surrounding parkland.
- iii. Office Conversion The scheme previously considered for conversion to office use whilst preserving the architectural features of the building.

### (f) The Temple

The existing use of the property for exhibitions and demonstrations was felt to be appropriate although capable of some expansion.

### (g) Small Mansion

The property is currently vacant apart from the West London Training Consortium and Staff flats. Uses considered (assuming relocation of the Training Consortium):

- i. Restaurant Whilst in terms of size this might be suitable for a restaurant/hotel use, difficulties would be presented in view of its location, both in terms of attracting customers and arrangements for access to the Park.
- ii. Museum Art Gallery Exhibition Centre This would be an attractive use as a widening of the present scope of the museum in The Large Mansion. It could well be used to house such uses as visiting exhibitions, etc. and if required, incorporate part of the Piano Museum collection. Rooms could be made available for community use.

### (h) Large Mansion

Museum use, to house the growing collections and assume an increasing role in the community.

## 4. LANDSCAPING

A package of landscaping and horticultural improvements has been considered to effect much needed improvements to the park generally and to improve the settings of the buildings when restored.

## 5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Of the various uses considered, the only revenue-producing schemes which might be self-supporting were the riding school use of the stables and very marginally, restaurant uses in the Orangery and Small Mansion. It would appear, however, that whilst such schemes might be self-supporting, they would produce little or no surplus capital to provide for the much needed restoration of the remaining listed buildings.

Although detailed estimates have not been prepared, it is anticipated that restoration of all of the buildings mentioned together with landscaping work necessary to restore the grounds to a proper state as a setting for the buildings concerned is likely to be in the region of £750,000, which in the present climate of financial constraint presents a major problem. It is appreciated, however, that the longer the buildings are permitted to remain in their unrepaired state, the greater the problem of renovation will become.

The conversion of the Stables to offices, preserving in full the architectural characteristics of the building, which has, of course, already been considered is the only scheme which can be seen to produce anything like the capital required to offer a total package in terms of the restoration of the amenities of the buildings and grounds. The local concern at this type of use is well known but it has to be considered whether, upon reflection, this use is acceptable having regard to the opportunity for overall improvement in the Park's amenities which could result.

#### 6. SUMMARY

The Working Party has studied the problem with the dual objective of restoring and putting into use the various listed buildings in the Park and achieving an overall improvement in the amenity of the park as an entity. The fact remains, however, that these objectives cannot be achieved without a minimum expenditure of the magnitude suggested and the problem of raising this capital has to be considered in depth.

## Architectural Competition

At the last GPJC meeting Cllr. Pat Nicholas (Lab., Hounslow) suggested holding an architectural competition for schemes to renovate the Park's historic buildings. The Royal Institute of British Architects would supervise this competition and is keen to do so. The proposal at the moment is for a two-stage scheme, with an open first stage inviting architects and developers together to submit outline proposals, followed by the selection of more detailed schemes for stage two. This competition would cost a certain amount of money and take some time. A "winner" would not emerge until at least next year. The GPJC will decide on 8th April whether to prepare a plan for the scheme and if so, it would decide in July whether to go ahead.

The key to this competition lies in the way the "brief" is drawn up. The terms could be restrictive or wide. Many of the problems we have already identified would have to be considered, such as, should evening access, extra car parking, service roads and access points to the Park be allowed? To what extent are we prepared to see the Park changed? The involvement of a developer is part of the competition and clearly the brief would have to be consistent with the covenants, which restrict the use of the buildings to leisure and recreation. However, as the report of the Working Party shows, there is still great pressure to get an office development scheme in the Park. One of the major current problems, not acknowledged in the Working Party report, is the need to find an appropriate place to display the Museum's transport collection. Would this be part of the brief? There are many questions associated with this idea of a competition; we will consider them further at the AGM on 24th April.

## Fund-raising Sub-committee

On Sunday 27th February we held a 'Bring and Buy' in the Scout Hut in Pope's Lane. Despite the rain it was well attended; we took just over £100 against expenses of £20.

Our next major event will be a Jumble Sale in St. James' Church Hall, Chiswick High Road (near the Chiswick Flyover) at 2.00 on Saturday, 7th May. We need Jumble for this, and especially we need helpers to deliver leaflets. Offers, please, to Joan Catterall (560 4262) or Eva Swann (993 2629).

We will be taking stalls at other events in the area:

- On Turnham Green on Saturday, 30th April; a cake tombola, if we are offered enough cakes!
- At Lampton Park on Monday, 2nd May.
- On Turnham Green, for the Brentford and Chiswick Round Table's Dinosaur Derby, Saturday, June 11th. Please come and support this - they gave us a great deal of help with last year's fete.
- In Brentford, at the Brentford Carnival, Saturday, 16th July.

For all these events we need prizes, gifts, good bric-a-brac etc. So the slogan must be: "Don't throw it away - throw it at Eva and Joan!"

Finally, the Fete is on the 23rd July. We need people to man (person?) the stalls, to make games, sell programmes and generally get involved. This year we hope that the Park staff will be opening the Nursery for the sale of surplus plants on the day, so the crowds will be even bigger. Please come and help.

# Charitable Status

In mid-February we learned with delight that the Charity Commissioners had approved our registration as a charity (number 286310). The long process of negotiation to achieve this, which included advising on the writing of our Constitution, has been handled on our behalf by Nick Scudamore of the Hounslow Law Centre and we are very grateful to him for his work.

Now that we are a registered charity our annual accounts will be filed for public inspection at the Charity Commission, 14 Ryder Street, St. James's, London SW1Y 6AH. This should make our activities as fund-raisers easier, as the public can be reassured that our activities are an "open book". We can also now apply for grants to those bodies restricted by their own trust deeds to giving only to registered charities. There are also various tax advantages from which we may benefit in the future.

## The Kitchens

The kitchen project was launched on the evening of 14th January with a talk in the museum, outlining the history of kitchens and showing slides of those in the Large Mansion. Work began on 29th January and has continued every weekend since then.

In the huge main kitchen the band of volunteers has achieved a great deal. Broken window-panes have been replaced, all the woodwork - built-in dresser, shelves for pots and pans, cupboards, door and window frames - and the glazed brick walls have been washed down, a natural wood work-surface over 20 feet long has been scrubbed clean of paint and oil splashes and brass handles gleam once again. The ceiling has been scraped clean of flaking distemper, cracks filled and the whole repainted (almost single-handedly by John Catterall) and work has started on slowly stripping paint and grease splashes from the quarry-tiled floor (the legacy of over 50 years' use as a park workroom). The cast-iron cooking equipment, the ovens, gas range and warming cabinet have been stripped, de-rusted and partly polished. The grained wood surfaces have been cleaned, but parts are going to need re-graining.

Friends can see the kitchens after the AGM and we hope that the GPJC will agree to our opening them on one weekend a month from June to September. We will need volunteers to act as attendants on these occasions - Please phone James Wisdom (994 4231) for more information.

## The Museum

The next major temporary exhibition is called "Romans, Travellers and Highwaymen - Travelling west on the old highway from Turnham Green to Bedfont". It has been prepared by the Local History Societies for Brentford and Chiswick and Hounslow and District with the Museum for the Hounslow Festival. It is open to the public from 23rd April to 19th June in the afternoons. It should be a fascinating history of travel on the main old roads through the Borough of Hounslow and of the villages that grew up along them.

The Friends have been allocated 20 tickets for the Opening Reception, to be held at 7.30 on Friday, 22nd April. If you would like one of these tickets please send a S.A.E. to James Wisdom, 25, Hartington Road, W.4. (994 4231).

## Miscellaneous News

We have approached 'Country Life' for permission to reprint Roger White's article on the Park. With their co-operation this is now being done and we hope to have copies for sale at the AGM.

Don't forget that Boston Manor House will be open to the public over the summer on Saturday afternoons.

Have you been to Ham House recently? They are also restoring their Kitchens - as they were in the late 17th century!

Conducted tours of the Nurseries, sale of surplus plants, a panel of experts - come to Gunnersbury Park on June 4th & 5th and June 25th & 26th - profits to the Park!