

FRIENDS OF GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

No. 71

July 2003

NEWSLETTER

From the Editor

The Notice of the Annual General Meeting on Thursday 24 July is enclosed with this Newsletter.

As usual the Newsletter provides information about forthcoming events at Gunnersbury; below, are details of two fantastic special events planned for the Park during August which Friends will enjoy – do support them!

This issue also has an interview with Mike Rowan. After 20 years of good work at Gunnersbury he will be leaving in early September as his post with CIP is being made redundant. He will be greatly missed.

Val Bott

AUGUST EVENTS AT GUNNERSBURY FOR EVERYONE!

Two events at Gunnersbury are being put on as part of Ealing Council's Summer Events programme. Please note that the experienced team in charge has already provided two consultation meetings for local residents.

Saturday 9 August Classical Concert by the English Chamber Orchestra

Playing from beneath a graceful canopy the 33-piece orchestra, with soloist Stephanie Gonley, will perform popular classics with a firework finale! Gates open 6pm, event ends 10.30pm. The audience will be able to picnic on the slopes behind the Large Mansion. Tickets £8.00 to £22.50. Box Office on 020 88256640.

Sunday 17 August The London Mela, a colourful one-day Asian festival

This celebration of music, fashion, comedy, cabaret and culture will feature multiple stages and pavilions, with a funfair, a sports arena for rounders, kabbadi and football, kite-making workshops and henna face painting. Admission is free: gates open at noon.

Recording the South Asian community

The Museum will use the day of the Mela to launch a collecting project with the local South Asian community. Ealing Council has already funded work by the Punjabi Centre in Southall to publicise the museum, to encourage donations of objects to represent the community in the museum collections and to use their radio station volunteers to do oral history interviews.

The Museum will be open 1pm–6pm as usual during the Mela but will also have a base in a special heritage marquee with other museums where it will be possible to receive and document objects offered for the collection, to discuss the work of the museum and to encourage visitors and community participation. The radio volunteers will have a sound booth in the marquee so they can record interviews. If anyone would like to help in the marquee on the day, please contact Vanda Foster at the Museum on 020 8992 1612

PARK LIFE

The Heritage Lottery Fund recently published an attractive full-colour report on UK parks projects which have received HLF funding for works on the refurbishment of historic landscapes. Gunnersbury's HLF funded work is described, along with mention of other recent activities such as the Japanese festival (the Matsuri) and the information boards which now explain the history of the landscape.

MIKE ROWAN

Mike reminisces with the Editor about his time working in Hounslow.

Mike Rowan began work with LB Hounslow in 1980. A native of York, he began his horticultural career as a traditional apprentice (just as Gunnersbury's Victorian gardeners would have done!). He also remembers with affection the year he spent at the Cambridge University Botanic Garden during his college course.

By the time he came to Gunnersbury in early 1983, to help run the nursery in the walled garden, he was describing himself as a "propagator and nurseryman". He married Sue that summer and they lived in a flat in the Small Mansion, overlooking the Bath-House, for the rest of the 1980s.



Mike Rowan leading a group on a Park walk

Mike fell in love with Gunnersbury, though his Sunday lunch was often interrupted by the need to deal with kids breaking into the Bath-House or some other crisis. He also had to deal with the aftermath of the 1987 storm

though he slept through it, waking to find huge old park trees destroyed. By this time he had been promoted to work as Area Manager for Chiswick House and Gunnersbury.

At the time when Hounslow's Leisure Services were transferred to CIP he was Principal Parks and Promotions Officer, but in November 2001 he was made Parks Development Manager and taken off direct work at Gunnersbury. However, he continued to support Jill Draper who was given responsibility for both Park and Museum.

Gradually becoming aware of how important the landscape at Gunnersbury is, he worked with partners from English Heritage and the Temple Trust and pulled together an important advisory group, on which James Wisdom represented the Friends for several years. This group researched Gunnersbury's past, evaluated its present state and drew up imaginative proposals which became the basis for a first successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The group continued to work with Mike on implementing the scheme and was only disbanded when he was moved to his present post 18 months ago.

Mike has worked with the Friends for nearly 20 years; he has led walks in the Park, given talks and bravely come to our Annual General Meeting and to consultation meetings to hear Friends' sometimes strongly-held views about proposals for future work!

His great successes were first to get more staff into the Park and then to obtain grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and from Brentford's Regeneration budget which enabled huge improvements to be made. He oversaw the upgrading of the playground, the restoration of the main drive with its "new" lampposts and the main gates, the Italian Garden and the first phase of works on the Bath-House, amongst other things.

Asked what he thought were the important things from his time here, Mike said he was particularly pleased that he and other officers had been able to develop a good working relationship with the Joint Committee. In addition, getting grants had enabled him to make a real difference and made it possible to save the Bath-House from continued decline. He regretted that his years of thinking and negotiating to get a solution for the Stables which provided a benefit to the local community had not been successful.

Mike's determination, imagination and devotion to Gunnersbury have been very important. We shall miss him and wish him well for the future.

Friends May talk

This jolly evening included an entertaining talk about the work which goes into designing and building gardens for the Royal Horticultural Society's Shows, a chance to see the new teaching block opened by Lord Rothschild and a brief tour of the garden area behind the high wall. Our thanks to Jason Drewett.

GUNNERSBURY PARK JOINT COMMITTEE

The GPJC met on 20 June. For the coming year the members of the Committee are Hounslow councillors Barwood, Cadbury, Edwards, Kirton, Lee and Smart, and Ealing councillors Brookes, Clements-Elliott, Green, Johnson, Sumner and Woodroffe. Joan Catterall and James Wisdom continue to serve as observers.

The Committee received a Review of the Business Plan for Gunnersbury Park and Museum 2002-3. The committee was concerned to hear that a number of key activities had not been carried out, including producing a conservation plan (nor even

finding the funds to prepare one), reviewing the collecting policy, and obtaining funding to improve the toilets and other things. In every case the reason given was lack of staff time and it is clear that Gunnersbury's staff are working under considerable pressure. The budget for financial year 2002-3 was also reviewed and showed some underspending, a very disappointing situation when funds are already short for many of the things that are needed. CIP's services to LB Hounslow are currently being reviewed and this includes the management contract for Gunnersbury.

The Committee also considered an application from a Christian organisation called Soul in the City. They sought the use of an area of the Park at no cost to them for a three-week camp site during a summer project. It was felt that this was not appropriate and the application was rejected.

The Committee's Use of Space and Forward Planning Working Group also met in late June. They considered the question of the future rebuilding of the Farm Dressing Rooms which were very badly damaged by fire. Rebuilding offers an opportunity of making them more suitable for modern needs, as they were originally designed when football had a virtual monopoly of sport in the Park.

English Heritage has advised the GPJC that the rebuilding should sit within the same "footprint" of the original buildings. It is possible that the insurance due may be sufficient to create new changing rooms and some additional facilities within this space. A study is now being conducted on the need for other sporting activities in the area and consideration is being given to other functions which might be housed there. The Working Group will meet again in the next few weeks to consider the possibilities.

"The Museum Club" January to June 2003

The education team have been working with West London College on a project to encourage adults to use museums for basic skills and language development. The students put on a photo exhibition about their museum visits during Adult Learners' Week both at Gunnersbury and at the College in Acton.



Mrs Weller (Carolyn Jones) has some new workers from West London College to help her run Gunnersbury House (part of the Museum Club project)

Local Heroes

Gunnersbury is one of twelve museums taking part in a special exhibition at the Greater London Assembly's City Hall between 21 July and 19 August.

For the exhibition each of the museums has invited a prominent local Black or Asian person to donate an object to its collection and to put on record the story of his or her life.



Sarah Victor

Gunnersbury Park Museum has selected as its "hero" a Hounslow student, Sarah Victor, the only Asian girl on the Brentford Women's Football team, who was introduced to the Director of *Bend it Like Beckham* as a real-life example of the film's heroine!

She has given the Museum her Adidas astro-turf boots and also recorded an interview about Brentford football, her life, and her views on Asian attitudes to museums. She said: "I don't think Asian people associate themselves with museums. They don't realise that one day the Asian community's going to be in local history."

In September the display panel about Sarah will be shown at Gunnersbury with her boots. And on Sept 11 a group of girl footballers from Hounslow's Heathland School will be going to visit the Museum and receive some football coaching from Sarah on one of the pitches.

Capel Manor at Gunnersbury SUMMER UGLY BUG BALL Saturday 12 July 10am-4pm

A chance to discover all there is to know about bugs and insects in the garden – and a fun day for all the family.

- a friendly bug walk looking at beneficial insects
- a plant sale
- aphid corner, looking at common pests and diseases
- hourly plant pest seminars
- ladybird balloon display
- insect drawing competition for children

All of this takes place at the Capel Manor College premises – entrance through the gate in the high brick wall near the car park, Popes Lane entrance.

(My apologies for giving the wrong date for Capel's summer event in the last issue and causing some confusion!)

LONDON OPEN HOUSE DAY, 21 September

The servants' quarters in the Large Mansion, The Temple and Princess Amelia's Bath-house will again be open specially this afternoon.

Friends may be needed to assist with this event – if you could help please contact Val Bott (see below or Vanda Foster at the Museum.

Letters to the Editor and contributions for the Newsletter are always welcome. Next issue out early October 2003.

To contact Val Bott, the editor, write to 25 Hartington Rd, London W4 3TL or email ValBott@museums.freeserve.co.uk

MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS

Window Shopping

Local shops in Ealing and Hounslow 1880-1930: photos and objects from local history library and Museum collections.

Let's Party!

Glamorous clothes for special occasions from the 19th and 20th centuries - with dressing up clothes for children.

Landscapes and Landmarks 11 April to 29 September

Paintings from the last two hundred years showing the changing landscape in the boroughs of Ealing and Hounslow.

Shoe 6 June to 7 July LAST CHANCE TO SEE THIS ONE!

An art and design exhibition with the theme of shoes, introduced by Sue Townsend.

The Victorian Kitchens

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

Summer Holiday Workshops for Children:

TOAD IN A HOLE 28 July-1 August 10.00-4.00

A fun week exploring the much loved tale of *The Wind in the Willows*. Kenneth Grahame wrote it, A A Milne adapted it as a play - you bring it to life at Gunnersbury! £75.00 for ages 8-13 years. Book in advance on 020 8992 1612 or 2247.

BIRKBECK COURSES

Two new courses of two terms (10 weeks each) begin in September at the Museum. Each costs £108 (concessions £54)

- **Changing Times, Changing Spaces: Tudor and Stuart Homes and Gardens** from Wednesday 24th September 11am-1pm
- **Human Origins: the Archaeology of Prehistory** from Wednesday 17th September 2.30-4.30pm

MUSEUM OPENING HOURS

April to October, weekdays 1-5pm, weekends & Bank Hols 1-6pm
November to March, open daily including Bank Hols 1-4 pm
Phone 020 8992 1612 **ADMISSION FREE**

MEMBERSHIP DETAILS

Thanks to everyone who renewed their membership promptly in April and a warm welcome to new members!

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. The Membership Secretary is Joan Catterall, 39 Lionel Road, Brentford, Middlesex TW8 9QZ.

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