

NEWSLETTER

FROM THE EDITOR

My apologies for the late arrival of the October Newsletter. We held it back during the postal dispute to ensure that it wasn't out of date and this has enabled us to add more recent news. ***Please do come along to our 7 December Christmas event advertised on the enclosed leaflet!***

A great deal has happened in the Park since the July Newsletter. Our stories in this issue cover our own Annual General Meeting as well as the two major events in the Park, the open air concert and the London Mela, the Open House weekend, another fire (this time in the Large Mansion) and the activities of the Gunnersbury Park Joint Committee, and we have the usual listing of events and activities.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2003 Friends' AGM took place in the Museum on 24 July. The officers reported a busy year and healthy finances. John Brazier, Val Bott, Joan Catterall, Anne Hobson, Liam O'Brien, Helen Poskitt, Renee Tyack and James Wisdom were re-elected to the committee and Chris Dakers, the honorary auditor, was re-appointed.

This business meeting was followed by a lively discussion about the future of the Park and Museum. Issues raised included the rebuilding of the Farm Changing Rooms, the continuing problem of the derelict Stables, the poor state of the Mansions and the fact that the Small Mansion shelter had been closed for six years.

Finally, James Wisdom, our Chairman, entertained us, using a sequence of old maps to show how it might be possible to identify the site of an earlier house on the Gunnersbury estate from the evidence of field boundaries and old footpaths.

GUNNERSBURY PARK JOINT COMMITTEE

The Joint Committee met on 26 September. They considered a thoughtful paper reviewing this summer's concert and the Mela. They also looked at the service plan for the Park and Museum and the budget. They discussed the need for a vision and a conservation plan for the Park and Museum, without which grant applications are unlikely to be successful.

There have also been meetings to consider the future of the Farm changing rooms (which were damaged by fire) and how they can be rebuilt to meet appropriate standards for the needs of the future.

For a long time now we have been unable to tell you about the organization which was chosen to restore the Stables. This was because the Committee granted their request for confidentiality in the negotiations. They have now withdrawn, so you may as well know that it was the Royal College of Art, which was looking for a new site for its Sculpture School. They were at the same time negotiating for a site in Ladbroke Grove, on which they have now agreed. They did very little work on their Stables proposals, so we can only assume they were holding Gunnersbury in reserve in case their main scheme fell through, or perhaps using it as a bargaining counter to get a better deal.

The next meeting of GPJC will be on 12 December 2003 at Gunnersbury.

PROMPT ACTION IN GUNNERSBURY FIRE

Phil Goldby, building manager at Gunnersbury, oversees the care and use of the historic buildings on the site. Recently, he proved the hero of the hour when fire broke out in the flat above the former Dining Room in the Large Mansion at around 1 am in the morning.

Phil lives on site and was able to quickly evacuate the building of residents. He then worked with the Fire Brigade to ensure that the minimum damage was done both to the plasterwork, panelling and the displays below the fire.

For museums a fire is a nightmare scenario, threatening irreplaceable objects, and the water that puts out a fire can do more damage to the exhibits than the fire itself.

We recognize how important his prompt action was that night and are grateful to Phil for his efforts. We also offer our sympathy to the resident whose flat was damaged.

The incident underlines one of the real difficulties at Gunnersbury, where the Museum shares the Large Mansion with a number of flats. We are glad that the Joint Committee has been taking seriously the whole question of the management of the accommodation in the Mansions.

MEMORIAL SEAT

A handsome seat has been installed beside the main drive at Gunnersbury, overlooking the lawns and Large Mansion. It commemorates a former Friend, Edward Alfred "Ted" Luffrum (17.5.1930- 27.5.2003) and was unveiled on 27 October. The plaque on the bench commemorates Mr Luffrum as the author of *Children of the Park*. We were unable to track information about the book in time for this Newsletter but would be pleased to hear from anyone who can provide details.

OPEN HOUSE DAY

This London-wide event in September was blessed with lovely weather. A number of visitors came to Gunnersbury for the first time, having seen it listed in the Open House booklet, some of them from some distance. The event drew over 300 visitors to the Museum and Kitchens and 126 visited Princess Amelia's Bath-House.

Museum staff were assisted by Carla, Ingrid and Richard who volunteered for the day, guiding people to the kitchens and Bath-House and Friends supervised the Bath-House.

In the Small Mansion a lace-making marathon was taking place; sponsors' gifts and donations collected by the Lace Guild members taking part went to the British Heart Foundation.

Jason Drewett of Capel Manor opened the walled garden later than expected, due to transport problems – engineering works meant that his journey to Gunnersbury took over 4 hours longer than expected. However, from mid afternoon Jason opened the walled garden where Capel Manor College runs its Gunnersbury operations, and had over 40 visitors in the following hour.

CAPEL MANOR COLLEGE OF HORTICULTURE & GARDEN DESIGN

You can now enrol for the next Greenheart course which will run for 5 months, starting at the end of January 2004. It will take place one evening a week, 6.30pm-9.30pm, plus some Saturdays. This is an ideal programme for avid amateurs and keen professionals offering theory and practical knowledge as well as hands-on experience.

Greenheart is a simple registration scheme available to all those living or working in Greater London; it recognises and records an individual's level of skills and experience. The course offers progression to City & Guilds Organic Husbandry, RHS General Certificate, NVQ2 Amenity Horticulture, C&G Gardening Certificate and entry on to a comprehensive range of garden design programmes.

Charges on application to Capel Manor College Gunnersbury Park, The Walled Garden, Popes Lane, W3. Phone 020 8993 6266

THE BARON'S POND

Regular visitors may have noticed that the pond opposite the main gates to the Park is in a poor state and badly in need of dredging.

This year's low rainfall, the depth of the mud (now over 3ft deep) and the fact that rubbish is often thrown into the pond have contributed to its problems. In addition, rainwater runs off the road into the pond so there is no amphibious life because of pollution from petrol and oil.

Some useful work has been done to clear the rubbish and improve the area this summer, but we understand from the L B Ealing rangers responsible for its care that the cost of dredging is likely to be £30,000. Funding of this kind is not available in their budgets so they are trying to resolve the problem by getting help from Thames Water, and possible grant applications to fund the necessary dredging are being considered.

THE LONDON MELA

Over the 23 year life of the Friends we have had few large events in the Park. Local residents have usually opposed them vigorously fearing noise, crowds, vandalism, etc. There have however been a few effective events, most notably a World Music festival in the 1980s and we knew Gunnersbury had the potential to be a successful venue for an appropriate event effectively managed. Well, the Mela was the event that proved what was possible.

It took place on the sports field where there was a huge amount to see and do, some of it in the numerous marquees, with a fair-ground and several sound stages below the huge parking area. The sunny weather was a little too hot at mid-day but there was shelter and an excellent choice of refreshment stalls offer food and drink.

From the moment we arrived in the vicinity of the Park the streets were lined with *no parking* bollards and each side street had someone to prevent visitors parking there, though we gather that this system broke down in the Gunnersbury Triangle area during the afternoon. Though there are still lessons to be learnt from this event, the planning was effective, people had been consulted and their views taken into account, the timing meant that it ended before dark and, as the Heritage Lottery Fund staff who ran an advice stall in the cultural marquee commented, the quality of the organisation was better than at any other big London event they had been to. The only real difficulty came when a lot of cars tried to leave the Park together at the end causing some long queues.

THE JAPANESE GARDEN

The refusal of the Manager of the Park & Museum to submit our Heritage Lottery Fund bid for the restoration of the Japanese Garden has caused great disappointment amongst the project's supporters.

It was a particularly important project because LB Ealing has the third largest Japanese community outside Japan and the committee had been delighted to have this opportunity of working with them.

We have now agreed that the funding (totalling £13,425) offered for this purpose must be returned to the many generous donors.

However, the Friends will retain the feasibility study for the Japanese Garden restoration, which was paid for from donations, and a further balance of about £1,600 will be kept in the accounts to support any future work on the Japanese Garden.



LOCAL HEROES

Following the *Local Heroes* exhibition (details in the July 2003 newsletter) each "hero" agreed to take part in an event with their local museum. Taking advantage of the sporting facilities in the Park the Museum invited groups from two local schools to meet Sarah Victor, Gunnersbury's "hero", and have some football coaching.

Girls were chosen from Heathland School in Hounslow and from Acton High in Ealing, with the aim of having an inter-borough match. Unfortunately Heathland School had problems with their minibus and their pupils were unable to come. The girls from Acton High were very enthusiastic, however, enjoying their museum visit and responding so well to Sarah's football coaching that the school has

arranged regular sessions from the Brentford Women's Football team. The display panel about Sarah from the exhibition will be on show in the Museum until the end of 2003 before touring Hounslow libraries. The *Local Heroes* exhibition and the accompanying information leaflets, proved invaluable for advertising the Museum, especially at the Mela in the summer.

MIKE ROWAN

At Mike's leaving party in September senior officers and councillors sang his praises and regretted his departure. The Friends presented him with a framed reproduction of part of John Rocque's 1745 map showing Gunnersbury.

Since then he has been appointed to a new post with a higher salary, as Director of the Mile End Park, a major venture, part of which crosses a major road on a green bridge. We think he will have fun!

JOHN MUNDY

For over 20 years John Mundy of Hounslow's Technical Services has been responsible for Gunnersbury's buildings, as well as other historic houses such as Boston Manor and Hogarth's House. His task has been almost impossible given their needs and the shortage of funding. His ingenuity has achieved a lot with very little. He has now taken responsibility for the Education Dept's buildings and we will miss his local knowledge, courtesy and patient good humour. We wish him well in his new job.

AT THE CONCERT

As part of the entertainment for the guests of Waitrose, sponsors of the summer concert, Lisa, Chris and Natasha of the Museum education team gave kitchen tours in costume as housekeeper, butler and maid. This was a great success!

Letters and contributions to the Newsletter are welcome.

Next issue January 2004

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.

Christmas shopping at the Museum

Don't forget that the museum shop is a wonderful source of presents! There is a wide range of new local history books, as well as inexpensive reproduction fossils, coins, toys and games!

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**

SPECIAL EVENT, 2pm, 7 December

Book Launch and readings from *A Little Boy's War* by Roy Bartlett - memories of childhood in wartime Ealing. Admission free.

NEW PROJECT: A Woman's Place?

The Education team is researching a new session on the changing role of women in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as they are expanding their programmes to include secondary as well as primary schools in future.

They would love to hear from Friends with any memories, information or objects relating to the suffrage movement and the struggle for women's rights that they would be willing to share with the Museum.

Contact Kate, Lisa or Julia on 020 8992 2247

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

A special exhibition, *Lace at Gunnersbury*, is being organized by Suzanne Jarvis of the Lace Guild for spring 2004. Lace was once a luxury status symbol and making lace by hand remains a skilled craft. Some lace-makers are now producing wonderful contemporary designs. Gwynnedd Roberts, the Guild's honorary curator, will give us a talk on the evening of 10 March 2004 using lace from her own collection to show us. Full details in the next Newsletter

MEMBERSHIP DETAILS

If you are already a Friend, please 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 and the stronger our voice. Subscription forms are available in the Museum or contact to the Membership Secretary, Joan Catterall, by post at 39 Lionel Road, Brentford, Middlesex TW8 9QZ.