

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

2.30pm 28 November 2004

(please assemble in Museum entrance hall)

The 2004 Annual General Meeting will take place a little later in the year than usual, for which we apologise. However, this timing provides us with an opportunity for unveiling the refurbished toilets and chatting over tea and mince pies after the meeting. Let us know if you would like to stand for the committee or get involved in any other way – or just come along to talk about Gunnersbury.

All are welcome!

THE LUCOZADE SIGN

Readers may have seen the recent publicity about the removal of this sign from a Great West Road building prior to demolition - people felt very affectionate towards this local landmark! The sign has now been delivered to the Museum where it will be preserved. However, this project illustrates the difficulties involved in attempting to preserve the recent past. The dismantled sign consists of sheets of aluminium, metal frameworks holding strings of light-bulbs, wires, and transformers and is impossible to display in its entirety, or even store inside the Large Mansion at Gunnersbury. Instead, a metal container has been supplied for it by its former owners, GlaxoSmithKline, and it will be housed in a secure area of the park. The Museum staff hope to display the more familiar parts of it in the near future, together with a video of it in operation.

GUNNERSBURY PARK JOINT COMMITTEE (GPJC)

The meeting on 24 September considered an initial report on the summer events programme provided by Ealing Council's events manager; these had been extremely successful, though some damage was done to gate posts again and wet weather meant that grass areas were damaged. Nevertheless they agreed in principle to hold the Mela and a Classical Concert again in 2005.

The Committee also received the programme of work planned for Gunnersbury in 2004-5, some of which had already been completed, and a summary of the current financial position. They heard that a planning application had been submitted for the proposed Butterfly House in the Park on which consultation would take place in October and an oral report on boating in the Park was provided (see page 2).

LONDON OPEN HOUSE, 19 September

We appealed for volunteers to help with Open House and two came forward to work with James Wisdom and Val Bott in The Temple and The Bath-House. Enormous thanks go to David Bays and Mary Curran without whom we could not have managed the crowds of visitors during the afternoon – 116 came to The Temple and 179 to the Bath-House, while 486 visited the Museum, including those who attended the opening of the football exhibition.

SUMMER EVENTS AT GUNNERSBURY

The London Mela, August 15

Fine weather for most of the day meant that there were over 70,000 visitors to this very successful event, held for the second time at Gunnersbury Park.

A new addition was Magic Mela, a designated children's play area with exotic animal sculptures. The Heritage Pavilion was also greatly improved, with stage performances of classical dance and craft demonstrations as well as museum stalls. This year Gunnersbury Park Museum was joined by the Victoria & Albert Museum, the *Moving Here* project, and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Gunnersbury's stand used the theme of food, featuring Indian spices and the pestles and mortars used in the Victorian Kitchens, put on with the help of the West



Preparing spices with traditional pestles and mortars

London Cohesion project, *Feasts and Flavours*, with creative writing and art workshops using recipes and favourite meals.

Common Ground – Anglo-Sikh Heritage

The free Common Ground festival at Gunnersbury August 28 was a celebration of the recently launched Anglo-Sikh Heritage Trail (look it up at www.asht.info). Tents were set up behind the Small Mansion to display memorabilia from Maharajah Duleep Singh, a favourite of Queen Victoria and designer of the Indian rooms at Osborne House. Stalls selling books on Sikh history also proved popular. The lawn behind the Large Mansion became an open-air Gurdwara for the day, with a stage for musical performances and speeches on the subject of Anglo-Sikh heritage. Throughout the day thousands of Sikh families from all over London visited the park.



CARING FOR THE COLLECTIONS

The Museum has received a grant from the Archives, Libraries and Museums Agency for London to buy a new de-humidifier for the Costume and Textiles store and a new humidifier for the Carriage Gallery. The old equipment ground to a halt last year and was beyond repair. Now you can see a sleek new Defensor PH14 sitting between the carriages to help prevent them from drying out and cracking during hot summers and centrally heated winters. The Friends Committee have been also been approached to help fund an alarm system to protect the carriages during opening hours.

A broken central heating pipe on the first floor caused flood damage to the E T Parris ceiling painting in the Long Gallery. Keith Holmes, the Museum's disaster conservator has been to view it. At the time of writing scaffolding was in place to allow a close inspection, reducing access to the *Shops & Shopping* and *Bees' Knees* exhibitions. The picture will probably be taken down for conservation treatment and repairs to the ceiling above.

BOATING IN THE PARK

It is some years since the Round Pond was used for boating. Problems with dense pondweed growth over two summers was followed by the resignation of the park's boating operator. This summer a new operator was sought but without success; problems with insurance for such an operation led to all potential applicants dropping out.

Boating on the lake has come to an end so instead Park staff will concentrate on raising awareness of the diversity of wildlife on and around the pond. Currently there is a resident heron, cormorants and a variety of ducks as well as carp and roach in the water, while new water-lilies will be planted in the pond next year. Park staff hope that visitors will soon see the area as an attraction for its ecology and wildlife as much as they did for its boating activities in the past.

The Bees' Knees



The special exhibition about Brentford Football Club, *The Bees' Knees*, opened at the Museum on 19 September. The Club has played at Griffin Park for the last hundred years and is one of the few League clubs to retain its place in the heart of the community.



The Museum commissioned Rachel Cutler, an oral history specialist, to record interviews with thirty-five supporters young and old. They spoke about their match-day rituals and memories, the highs and lows of supporting the Club and their thoughts on the future of Griffin Park. This work has produced a fascinating archive of facts and stories, many of which are transcribed or can be heard in the exhibition.

Fans remember Brentford's glory days in the First Division when crowds of 30,000 came to Griffin Park and the sound of wooden rattles was deafening. They provide stories of the Welsh international, Dai Hopkins, who walked to Griffin Park with his boots in a paper parcel, and about Gerry Cakebread who played a match even when his teeth had been knocked out! They explain why they support Brentford and give their views on the takeover by Bees United and the future of the club. A CD-rom of extracts from the interviews, called *Beesspoken*, is on sale in the museum.

The exhibition aims to capture the atmosphere of Griffin Park as described by the fans – visitors enter the display through a mock-up of the famous Braemar Road entrance and stand on the "pitch". It shows photos, programmes, kit, match videos and supporters' mementoes, from polystyrene cheeses to inflatable bees! You can even manage your own "Bees" team – in a table-top game. This approach demonstrates how, with imagination, almost any kind of exhibition can successfully be accommodated in the rather grand rooms of the Large Mansion.

During the October half-term, Gunnersbury's football pitches were made available to *Football in the Community* for children's courses. One group also visited the museum to see *The Bees' Knees* exhibition and met Busby Bee, the Brentford mascot.

MORE VANDALISM

The electric cables providing power to the "Victorian" lamp standards on the main drive were all cut in late October. This malicious and unpleasant piece of damage comes at the time of year when the lighting is needed most. The lamps will be modified to prevent a recurrence of this damage but this will take some weeks to complete.

Future Meetings of Gunnersbury Park Joint Committee will take place at 6pm on

10 December 2004

18 March 2005

17 June 2005

Full details of agendas and minutes can be found at www.hounslow.gov.uk

THE FARM DRESSING ROOMS

It is 2 years since the arson attack on the Dressing Rooms. Though on the surface little progress seems to have been made, behind the scenes much is going on, writes *Jill Draper, the Estate Manager*.

Two insurance claims have been prepared, one to cover temporary repairs to the adjoining block to bring it back into short term use for teams and minimise the loss of income from the reduced facilities, and the other to cover rebuilding of the damaged areas. The latter has progressed slowly because a very detailed estimate had to be prepared.

We have taken the opportunity to consider fully the future use of the building and the west side of the park with a working party to consider options for both sports and arts use. The GPJC approved the group's recommendation that the dressing rooms be reinstated and the sports facilities improved. We have been investigating the possibilities with Active Ealing, L B Ealing's sports section, Brentford Football in the Community, the Football Foundation and other groups. Funds have been found to create a Gunnersbury Sports Development Strategy on which work will begin early in 2005. It will form the basis for grant applications to enable better use of the insurance settlement for refurbishment and development. Our fingers are crossed for a bright future for this sad looking building.

CELEBRATING POLAND

The grand opening of this exhibition on 15 October attracted nearly 150 guests. These included the Mayors of Ealing and Hounslow as well as the Mayor of Bielany, the Polish borough twinned with Ealing, the Polish ambassador and MPs Steve Pound and Clive Soley.



Poland joined the European Union in May and the exhibition provides an opportunity to show Polish culture, history and folklore. It also considers the impact of the Second World War on Poland and why Polish servicemen fought alongside the Allies, as well as showing the contribution of the Polish community to West London.

The Museum's Christmas tree will be decorated in Polish style – do go and see it from 12 December onwards, and there will be Polish festive songs and carols on 19 December (see above right).

AT THE MUSEUM. . .

A NEW COMMUNITY OUTREACH OFFICER

Welcome to the Museum's new Community Outreach Officer, Hema Raul, who began work on October 25. She is a local person who has worked in various posts, including the Crafts Council and Leicester Museums, and as a volunteer on oral history at Gunnersbury. Her 15-month post has been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund to create a South Asian Archive and exhibitions at the Museum.

FESTIVE POLISH MUSIC Sunday 19 December

To accompany the *Celebrating Poland* exhibition, the Polish community men's choir will be singing carols and festive songs in the museum. **Further details available mid-November – phone the Museum on 020 8992 1612. Admission free.**

MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS

The Bees' Knees (until 28 February 2005)

An exhibition to celebrate the centenary of Brentford Football Club at Griffin Park..

Celebrating Poland (until 31 January 2005)

An exhibition to mark Poland's accession to the European Union.

MUSEUM OPENING HOURS

Winter opening times, November to March: open daily 1-4 pm,

ADMISSION IS FREE

The Victorian Kitchens

This wing of the Large Mansion which houses the Rothschilds' kitchens is now closed for the winter. (The kitchens are usually open weekends, April to October)

MEMBERSHIP DETAILS

If you are already a Friend, do encourage someone else to join! If you are not, sign up now to join our mailing list and receive the Newsletter. The subscription, at £3, is very modest - but more members mean a better the income and a stronger voice!

There are subscription forms in the Museum or just send your cheque, name and address to the Membership Secretary, Joan Catterall, by post to 39 Lionel Road, Brentford, TW8 9QZ.

Letters and contributions to the Newsletter are welcome.

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

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