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NEWSLETTER

Managing a National Trust property from spiralling decline to a good news story, a talk by Julie Smith, National Trust

29 November 2010 in the Museum, refreshments from 7.00, talk 7.30

With the help of one of our members, who works for the National Trust, we have been able to arrange an unusual talk, based on the personal experience of the manager of a National Trust house, garden and grounds.

The speaker will be Julie Smith, who joined the National Trust five and a half years ago as Property Manager for Upton House near Banbury. Julie went to the Trust from Fired Earth where she had become Logistics and Business Excellence Director in 2002. Prior to that she worked for Marks and Spencer for 20 years where she held a variety of management roles, including 8 years in their Baker Street Head Office, responsible for the management of £1bn of store costs, and as Head of Retail Operations for a portfolio of stores with sales totalling £150m.



Upton dates from the 1690s but was refurbished in the 1930s by the Bearsted family whose wealth came from the Shell Oil Co.

For several years Upton House and Gardens had been in decline. Julie was under pressure to tackle costs when she arrived, as the property was on course to deliver a full year deficit of almost £200,000. Falling visitor numbers and increasing financial deficits over a number of years had led to low investment which in turn led to low staff and volunteer morale. In her time at Upton House she has increased visitor numbers by 55%, improved the financial result seven-fold and produced a surplus for the first time in over 20 years.

Julie and her team have recently completed a £1m building and restoration programme, including the conversion of a 1930s squash court into an exhibition/interpretation area and conference centre. Upton House was also one of the first properties in the National Trust to embark on the controversial challenge of 'bringing the property to life' – moving the property from being a traditional art gallery/museum into one which allows visitors to feel the atmosphere of a 1930s country house weekend party, and to learn about the people who lived and worked in the house in its heyday.

Hear how Julie managed to turn the property from a spiralling decline to a good news story and discover the lessons for Gunnersbury Park.

ROY HANSHAW

We are sorry to have to pass on the news that Roy Hanshaw died suddenly in mid October.

Roy worked as a gardener at Gunnersbury from 1951 until 1993 and he and his wife, Renee, lived in the Small Mansion from 1960 until their move to Devon a few months ago.

Happily, before they left Gunnersbury, Roy and Renee recorded their wonderful memories of living and working in the Park over so many years. These recordings are now in the museum collection for posterity.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

A separate flier is enclosed with this *Newsletter* with details of the Friends' Annual General Meeting. This will take place in the Terrace Room of the Small Mansion on Sunday 12 December, from 2.30 to 4.30pm. Tea and mince pies will be provided.

Please note that only members who have paid their subscription for 2010/11 will be entitled to attend and vote. If your payment is still due, you will find a reminder slip with this Newsletter.

ALICE MYERS BEQUEST

We are pleased to report that the executors of the will of our benefactor, Alice Myers, have passed on a further sum from her bequest. This amounts to an additional £20,000, making a total of £200,000.

MUSEUM NEWS

Stir-Up Sunday: free family event

Join the Victorian servants as they prepare for the Christmas festivities! Traditionally, the preparations would begin on the last Sunday before Advent, known as Stir-Up Sunday. The Victorian kitchens will be decked with holly and ivy to put you in the Christmas spirit, and you can help the servants pound the sugar and spices, stir the plum pudding and make a Christmas wish!

You might also discover a few Christmas traditions. . . Why do we stir the pudding from East to West? Why do we put three spices into the mince pies? And who are the Lord and Lady of Misrule?

Sessions take place first-come, first-served as follows: 11.30am –12.30pm, 1–2 pm and 2.30–3.30pm. Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times. Phone 020 8992 2247 for details



The Polish Lives exhibition 5 Dec 2010 – 20 Jan 2011

Ealing is renowned for its large Polish community, the result of several waves of migration which began with the famous Polish pilots based at Northolt during World War II.

This exhibition is the result of an oral history project carried out by Ealing Local Studies Library, with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Different generations of Polish residents were interviewed about their origins, experiences of living in Ealing and how they have maintained or adapted Polish cultural traditions and attitudes.

The interviews are being edited for a website, which can be used by local schools. Gunnersbury Park Museum is providing the main venue for the exhibition and will add the original interviews to the museum's oral history archives.

Vocational training for schools

In February 2011 the museum education department will be working on a joint project with the London Transport Museum Depot at Acton and the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) to provide vocational training for a group of secondary school pupils from Acton High School.

Museum staff will train the pupils to deliver sessions on the Victorian Kitchens to a class from Derwentwater Primary School – they will be learning the skills of live interpretation in museums. This project will help them to work towards their Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (CoPE) by enabling them to practice key skills such as communication and team-work. Some of them will be "actors" in the Kitchens and some will be our "site managers". The latter will be expected to focus on customer service skills.

Iron Age coins

The Friends made a donation to the Museum to enable it to buy seventeen Iron Age coins found in Brentford. These have now arrived at Gunnersbury and are being carefully documented before they go on show in the not too distant future.

PARK NEWS

Trees in the Park

Work to the trees in the Park has been proceeding. From what we can see the work has been done carefully, and wherever possible the trees have been preserved. Unfortunately, some were beyond rescue and have been cut down completely.

The Friends would like to support any plans for replanting which are made, especially in the context of the Conservation Management Plan, and we are waiting to hear what is proposed. As always our funding must make possible extra or higher quality planting rather than replacing any funds already allocated for this purpose. We will keep you informed of any developments.

New toilets

Richard Gill, Development Manager for the Park, reports that the new toilets are now complete and open for use. There are three unisex toilets, one with baby changing facilities, and a disabled-access toilet accessed by radar key. There has yet to be an official opening!

THE SMALL MANSION

The theft of lead from most of the roof behind the parapets of the Small Mansion has allowed rainwater in and caused considerable damage. One of the upstairs flats (luckily vacated) has now lost ceilings and the floors are sodden and mouldy.

The water reached the ground floor, leaving one door so swollen it no longer fits its frame. There is mould on the ceilings and floors of the rooms which were being used by the Museum Education Service as a class room and lunch room for sixty children. The roof has now been made watertight and the rooms are being dried out with a view to having the ceilings repainted.

JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

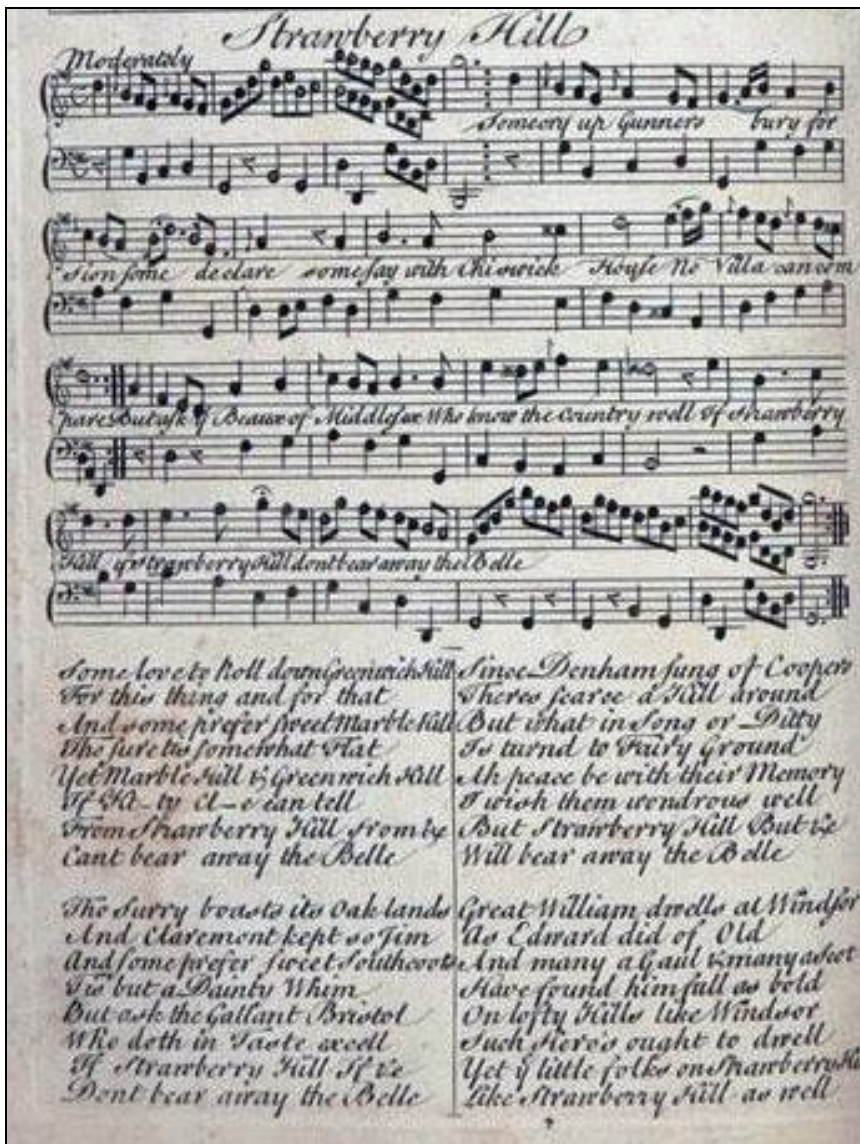
At the time of assembling this *Newsletter*, there has still been no meeting of the GPJAC since November 2009. We understand one may take place on 12 or 19 November.

In addition to the 6 members listed in our last issue, we understand that Cllr Corinna Smart (L B Hounslow) has been given special responsibility for Gunnersbury.

This is an exceptionally difficult time as severe cuts to local authority budgets have been imposed by the Government's recent Comprehensive Spending Review. We will be watching the situation closely to ensure that the future of Gunnersbury remains on the agenda.

**“Some cry up Gunnersbury, for
Sion some declare
Some say with Chiswick House no
Villa can compare
But ask the Beaux of Middlesex who
know the country well
If Strawberry Hill, yes Strawberry
Hill, don't bear away the Belle”**

This was sung at the official reopening of Strawberry Hill in September after its £9 million restoration project.



18th century sheet music from the Thomas Layton Collection

A HIVE OF INDUSTRY

Quietly over the summer a new exhibition has been installed at the Museum at Gunnersbury. A fantastic array of products made in Hounslow and Ealing, the two boroughs the museum serves, has been brought out of the stores. Visitors will be amazed at the number of famous brands which have local connections!

A Hive of Industry is the kind of exhibition Gunnersbury does really well and it demonstrates what our Museum could be with some proper investment. Despite its extreme lack of resources, the combination of a rich collection and an imaginative curator really works. This display is thoughtfully laid out, clearly labelled, and very enjoyable.

There are some surprising facts to discover: did you know that Elizabeth I insisted that her bread be made from Heston wheat, that

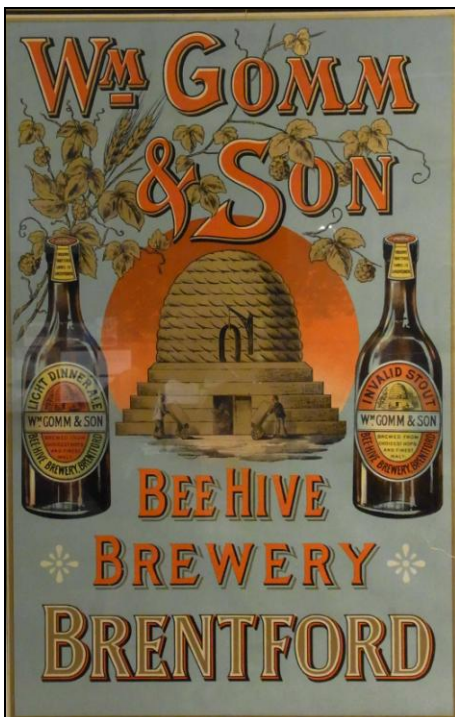
Buckingham Palace was built with bricks made in Northolt, that an Acton toy factory made the teddy bear which was the inspiration for Winnie-the-Pooh and that Feltham supplied fire extinguishers to the Tsar of Russia?

Some of the objects are now on show for the first time. You will find a vacuum cleaner from the Hoover factory, tins of Cherry Blossom boot polish, a Bush radio and a Leak tuner, a seventeenth century sword from the Hounslow sword factory, a Jantzen swimming costume, beer bottles from Fuller Smith and Turner, early pharmaceuticals from Glaxo, Noon curry packaging, razors from Gillette and Wilkinson Sword, an Ealing Studios film poster and a wealth of other products from well-known factories such as Coty, Sandersons, Firestone, Macleans, and Lucozade.

This exhibition explains why the area has been so productive – the local soil encouraged horticulture and brick-making, fishing and boat-building used the Thames, canals and railways attracted a huge variety of industry, modern model factories lined the Great West Road and film studios and airports loved the clean air west of London.

If you or your family have worked in these local industries Vanda Foster, the Curator, would love you to share your thoughts and memories, and even add to the exhibition with loans or donations of products or old photos. Contact her on 020 8992 1612 or by e-mail at vanda.foster@laing.com.

***A Hive of Industry* runs until September 2011, admission free.**
Opening times - 11 to 5 April – October; 11 to 4 November – March.



This Brewery was set up in about 1840 but was taken over by Fuller Smith and Turner in 1908

FRIENDS of GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

Many of you have renewed your membership very promptly (the membership year starts on 1 April). Our thanks for continuing to support the Friends and a warm welcome to those new members who have joined us recently.

If you are already a Friend, do encourage someone else to join. The subscription, at £5, is very modest – a bigger membership means a better income and a stronger voice.

Please send your cheque, made out to “the Friends of Gunnersbury Park & Museum”, to The Membership Secretary, Friends of Gunnersbury Park & Museum, 55 Park Drive, London W3 8ND.

**We welcome contributions to the Newsletter;
the next issue will be compiled in January 2011**

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