

To keep up to date, please use the Friends' website: www.gunnersburyfriends.org

NEWSLETTER

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Park Walk, Saturday 11 June, from 10.30am to 12 noon

Walk round the historic landscape of the Park with James Wisdom, to discuss the progress of the restoration project. Meet at the Museum – no need to book, just turn up.

***A Community of Gardeners, 1650-1800*, talk on 15 Sept 7.30pm**

An illustrated talk by Val Bott, looking at the numerous nursery gardeners in Brentford and Chiswick between 1650 and 1800, what they grew, their aristocratic contracts and business and family connections. To be held in the Museum, with light refreshments from 7, talk starts at 7.30pm, no need to book.

AGM 17 July 2011

This will take place in the Terrace Room of the Small Mansion on Sunday 17 July, from 2.30 to 4.30pm. Please note that you will be only entitled to attend and vote if you have paid your subscription for 2011/12 (renewal slip enclosed).

JOAN CATTERALL 1941–2011

Joan Catterall, one of our founder members in 1981, died on 24 February after a long illness. To many Joan was the greatest friend Gunnersbury had. She was adept at keeping people in touch with what was going on in the Park and Museum.

We wrote about Joan's contribution to the Park and Museum in Newsletter 86, when she resigned as Membership Secretary and soon afterwards from her part-time job as a steward in the Museum. It is important also to remember that Joan worked tirelessly for her Brentford community in other ways – she chaired the board of the Brentford Community Resource Centre, was a governor of Lionel Road School, served as a co-opted member of Hounslow Council's Isleworth and Brentford Area Committee and was associated with many other local organisations. Joan planned her own funeral at Mortlake Crematorium on 10 March, surprising and amusing the mourners with her choice of Morecambe & Wise's *Bring me Sunshine* as we entered for the service! The crowd of friends, neighbours and colleagues from the local authority and other organisations who attended, returned to the Small Mansion afterwards to reminisce and to celebrate her achievements – she would have enjoyed the party!



TREES FOR THE PARK

Following the detailed tree survey last year a careful pruning programme was carried out by Continental Landscapes, who are responsible for the maintenance of the landscape. A number of trees which were diseased or dead were removed, which resulted in some significant losses.

Some re-planting will be undertaken and the Friends' Committee has agreed to make a donation of £1,500 towards the reinstatement of some of the most important trees, in line with the Conservation Management Plan.

RESTORATION PLANS

The 15 April meeting of the Gunnersbury Park Joint Advisory Panel began with a tribute to Joan Catterall and a minutes' silence in her memory, as she was a Friends' Observer on the old Joint Committee for many years.

Details of the reports considered at the meeting can be found on-line at <http://tiny.cc/clY4u>.

Future meetings will be on 1 July and 23 September.

The budget for 2010/11 showed how the £375,200 funding provided by each of the two local authorities was spent.

Much of the meeting considered the major bid for a Heritage Lottery Fund grant to be submitted in November. Richard Gill, Regeneration Manager (Hounslow), and Bridget Gregory, Project Manager (Ealing) gave a Power Point presentation on the application process, which can be viewed through the web link above.

The HLF emphasises how important it is for their grants to help people learn about their own and other people's heritage. This is essential for all projects. Then a project can conserve the heritage and/or help more people, and a wider range of people, to take an active part in and make decisions about heritage.

In the light of these criteria, the current description of the project reads: *"The project will refurbish Gunnersbury Park as a high quality environment and allow the whole community to enjoy participating in its leisure, culture and heritage opportunities.*

The unique combination of buildings and landscape will be conserved, removing them from the 'at risk register', and refurbishing them with sustainable uses that secure Gunnersbury's significance and value for the future.

The focus will be on an enhanced museum which allows its rich collections to inspire learning, creativity and an understanding of why Gunnersbury's heritage is important."

Time is tight, with a great deal to prepare by November, with a decision 6 months later. If successful Stage 1 moneys would fund the development work needed to support the next bid for Stage 2 funding to implement the proposals. The budget presented to the meeting showed an expectation of partnership funding of between £5m and £8m (in addition to the two councils' contribution) and a grant of £10-£13m from HLF.

Jestico & Whiles (architects, interior designers and project managers) prepared L B Ealing's funding bids for Pitzhanger Manor and Walpole Park. They have been re-engaged to oversee the application for Gunnersbury.

Cushman and Wakefield, a leading global property consultancy, have been contracted to provide a commercial valuation of the buildings and to find partners for viable long-term use.

The engineering firm Giffords have been commissioned to survey the Large Mansion.

The consulting engineers Ellis & Moore have been commissioned to survey the Stables.

The historic landscapes consultant Sarah Couch will draw up the Landscape Plan.

Jura Consultants have been appointed to prepare a Feasibility Study on the future of the Museum Service. This part of the project is being supervised by a steering group; the Friends' committee has nominated Val Bott as our representative on this. At the GPJAP Councillors agreed that they wanted an exciting project which will inspire HLF to support it. They want a strong local museum, but not a stately home which might have to compete for visitors with other West London historic houses, and they rejected the idea of a 'distributed museum' with small displays in many locations.

Leap Change Consultancy will develop a consultation and engagement strategy. This part of the project is being supported by another steering group, on which the Friends' committee has nominated Philippa Dolphin as our representative. When discussing the consultation, GPJAP Councillors wanted it to include people who don't use the Park or Museum, across a wide area of London, as well as those who do.

The members of the Project Board overseeing the whole scheme are Cllr Kamaljit Dhindsa and Cllr Corinna Smart, council officers Mike Jordan from Hounslow and Keith Townsend from Ealing, and representatives from English Heritage. Reporting to them is a Project Team with the lead consultant (Jude Harris) and officers from Ealing (Jonathan Kirby and Bridget Gregory) and Hounslow (Hamish Pringle and Richard Gill). James Wisdom has agreed to attend these meetings on behalf of the Friends.

We are expecting the outcomes of these various studies will enable the lead consultants to present 'Initial Design Concept Options, with commercial opportunities' in July, and for these to go to public consultation in August. This would leave enough time for the two Councils to approve the HLF application by the November deadline.

A NEW COMMUNITY ADVISORY PANEL

Richard Gill, Regeneration Manager, has written as follows:

Ealing Council and Hounslow Council, as joint owners of Gunnersbury Park and Museum, are planning an exciting project to enhance and improve the buildings and landscape. Both Councils wish to assemble a Community Advisory Panel, a collection of individuals who bring unique knowledge and skills to contribute to the development of the project.

This will be a tremendous opportunity if you have an interest and expertise in one or more of the following: leisure, arts and culture, nature conservation, historic buildings, landscape and the local community as well as fundraising and project or business management.

This Community Advisory Panel will be established to develop the vision and may also potentially form the basis of a trust or another form of management in the future.

The Advisory Panel will not have formal authority to govern the project but will provide key information, skills and expertise to enhance the project delivery. To be a member of the Community Advisory Panel will require a fair amount of time and effort such as attendance at meetings, reading and commenting on papers and participation in working groups or consultation events.

If you are interested I can send you an application pack.'

Contact Richard by email at richard.gill@hounslow.gov.uk or by phone on 020 8992 1612.

GUNNERSBURY PARK: a Rothschild house

Diana Davis' talk to Gunnersbury Friends and Brentford & Chiswick Local History Society in January drew a large crowd.

She summarised well the story of the Rothschilds' adaptation of the Large Mansion, using local archives and information from the Rothschild Archive. She acknowledged the importance of the research done for Ann and James Collett-White's book on the Rothschilds at Gunnersbury in the 1980s.

Explaining the family's use of the mansion as a setting for glamorous events and parties she showed examples of paintings and of the heavily decorated French furniture which they favoured, none of which remains at Gunnersbury today. She also spoke of the exotic fruits the gardeners produced to impress the guests but we are still unsure of the influence of Jewish dietary laws.

CAPEL MANOR at GUNNERSBURY

The College's West London centre is based in the Walled Garden at Gunnersbury. It will be holding two Open Days in the next few weeks: on Saturday 14 May, from 10am to 1pm, with a plant sale, and on Friday 17 June, from 1pm to 5pm.

It also offers advice sessions where you can meet the staff to find out which course may be suitable for you. These will be on Wednesday 18 May and Tuesday 12 July from 5.30 to 8.00pm.

VANDA FOSTER

The April/June 2011 issues of *What's On in Hounslow* carries an interview with Vanda Foster, Gunnersbury's Curator. Here are extracts from the article:

Vanda was born in Ealing, spent her early life in Chiswick and returned to Ealing in 1979 so Gunnersbury is 'dear to my heart, as my father lived in Gunnersbury Avenue and my aunt knew the park when the Rothschilds were still there'.

• *What brought you to work here?*

After a course in Museum Studies I became Keeper at Manchester's Gallery of Costume, then I was Senior Assistant Keeper of Costume at the Museum of London. I left to have children but still did occasional projects at the Barbican Art Gallery and Pitzhanger Manor. I even did some freelance work for Gunnersbury's education service as 'Rosie the Kitchen maid' – but acting is not my forte! (I am, however, full of admiration for our team - they deliver workshops for nearly 10,000 children every year).

I came back to Gunnersbury in 1997 as a volunteer. A part-time post came up and I got it. I've been here ever since, progressing to full-time Curator in 2006.

• *What's been your main challenge?*

The richness and size of our collection is a great inspiration as well as a great challenge. Past curators have accepted all sorts of objects from local residents and we now have 40,000 objects filling 16 rooms, from attics to cellars. Getting access and moving things around is a huge problem, but I do try to give everything a turn on display in themed exhibitions.

• *Which exhibition did you most enjoy doing?*

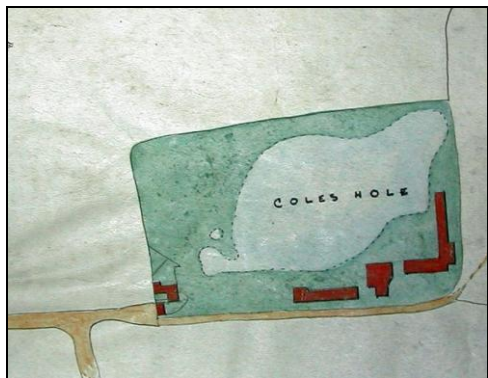
The one celebrating 100 years of Brentford Football Club at Griffin Park. I met wonderful supporters and saw memorabilia in attics and sheds! Our grand Dining Room was the only space large enough but was a difficult setting until Ealing's Questors Theatre brought their scene-building skills and transformed it into 'Griffin Park' with pitch, lights, stand and players' entrance!

ELEPHANTS & RHINOS

I have been researching brick- and tile-makers in 18th and 19th century Brentford for an article in the 2011 issue of the *Brentford & Chiswick Local History Journal*.

It is hard to pin down the local brickfields of that time as most were temporary excavations. Once the brick-earth was exhausted the ground was made up and returned to farming or horticulture. But one enormous clay pit survives, along with one of the kilns in which tiles and chimney pots were fired. This was a deep pit with high quality clay which was purchased by the Rothschilds in 1861. Within a few years it had become the Potomac Lake, its kiln disguised as a gothic boathouse.

Even more surprising, it is likely that this is the clay pit from which one past owner, William Kirby Trimmer, preserved an array of fossil bones which he described in an article written shortly before his death and published by the Royal Society in 1813. There were oxen, rhinoceros and elephant! *Val Bott*



Sketch from the purchase deed, 1861

NEXT ISSUE

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

Contact Val Bott, Honorary Editor,
25 Hartington Rd, London W4 3TL
Val Bott@museums.freeseerve.co.uk

Registered Charity no 286310

IN THE MUSEUM

Heavy metal

28 May – 19 June

An exhibition of work by the Isleworth & District branch of the Embroiders' Guild.

This exciting exhibition will include a variety of interpretations of the theme of "heavy metal" – you may find an interpretation of the fine metalwork by Tijou at Hampton Court Palace, a view of the *Flying Scotsman*, or intricate and detailed work in golden thread. Members of the Guild will be on hand to answer questions and to encourage would-be embroiders.

Some of the exhibits will be for sale and a selection of small items such as cards and inspiration packs will be on sale in the museum shop during the exhibition.

A Hive of Industry, the exhibition of local products from the boroughs of Ealing and Hounslow, continues.

HALF-TERM HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES, 1 June 2011

The Museum will be providing entertaining sessions on 1 June. They suggest coming for a whole day in the Park, with a picnic (there will be a sheltered place to eat if the weather is bad) or taking lunch in the cafe.

Metal monsters – 2 sessions, 11am to 12.30pm/1.30 to 3pm

£3 per child to be paid in cash on the day, advance booking essential – 020 8992 2247. Each child must be accompanied by an adult for whom there is no charge.

In these holiday workshops you will create your own "metal monster" using material, threads, sequins and embroidery – will it be a robot, a space rocket or a Dalek? The workshops will be led by members of the Embroiders' Guild to link to their exhibition.

Toys and Games of the past – 2 sessions, 11.30am – 12.30pm or 1.30 – 2.30pm, free family activities, no booking needed.

Discover the sorts of toys your great-grandparents might have played with. See original and replica toys of the past such as china dolls, teddy bears and clockwork toys. Will you be skilled enough to win the cup and ball game? Or fast enough to keep the whipping top spinning. Come along and find out!

Admission to the Museum is free. Opening times - 11 to 5 (April to October); 11 to 4 (November to March) 020 8992 1612

FRIENDS of GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

A warm welcome to those who have joined us recently. Existing members can help by encouraging others to join. The £5 subscription is modest and a bigger membership means a better income and a stronger voice. **Subscriptions are due on 1 April** – thank you to those who have renewed already. If you have not yet paid we have included a renewal slip with this issue of the *Newsletter*.

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.