

# FRIENDS OF GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

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To keep up to date, please register at the Friends' website: [www.gunnersburyfriends.org](http://www.gunnersburyfriends.org)

# NEWSLETTER

## **JOIN A MUSEUM OUTING, 23 July 2011**

The Brentford & Chiswick Local History Society would be delighted to welcome Gunnersbury Friends on their summer outing. The aim of the day is to evaluate what three museums have achieved with recent major investment. We will then report back to the team which is developing a scheme for the future of Gunnersbury Park Museum and you could make a useful contribution to this exercise.

The visit takes in 3 Essex museums where work was completed in 2010 –

- Valence House, Barking, an old established local history museum whose Tudor manor house was completely refurbished and re-displayed with an HLF grant,
- the Havering Museum in Romford, a completely new local history museum housed in part of the old Romford Brewery, also created with an HLF grant, where lunch will be provided, and
- the Chelmsford and Essex Museum, an old-established local museum in a park whose local authority funded a £5 million extension after it failed to get an HLF grant; here we shall have tea and discuss the day's visits.

To book a place please use the form which is enclosed with this Newsletter. The price is £30 and includes your coach fare, the buffet lunch and tea. Your cheque should be made out to Brentford & Chiswick Local History Society.

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## **AGM 17 July 2011 – Our Thirtieth Birthday!**

The Annual General Meeting 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 only be entitled to attend and vote if you have paid your subscription for 2011/12 – a renewal slip was enclosed with newsletter 89.

After the business meeting we will spend some time discussing key issues from the development work on the future of Gunnersbury which has been progressing, and as the Friends are 30 years old this year, there will be tea and cake!

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## **A COMMUNITY OF GARDENERS, 1650-1800**

### **A 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.

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## **LONDON OPEN HOUSE WEEKEND 18/19 SEPTEMBER**

Friends have sometimes acted as volunteer guides at Gunnersbury on past Open House weekends. This annual event sees many buildings which are not normally accessible open their doors to visitors. Find out about this year's programme at [www.londonopenhouse.org](http://www.londonopenhouse.org) where you can order their booklet. Vanda Foster is once again hoping to find volunteers, particularly for Princess Amelia's Bath-House. If you would be willing to do a 2-hour shift, please contact her on 020 8992 1612 or at [vanda.foster@laing.co.uk](mailto:vanda.foster@laing.co.uk). If you are a guide you will receive a badge enabling you to visit other buildings in the scheme without queueing!

## GUNNERSBURY PARK JOINT ADVISORY PANEL

The Gunnersbury Park Joint Advisory Panel met on Friday 1 July.

The members of the Panel were nominated in May, three from each borough. They are Cllrs Joanna Dabrowska, Yvonne Johnson and Bassam Marfouz from Ealing Council and Cllrs Mel Collins, Elizabeth Hughes and Adrian Lee from Hounslow. Cllr Collins was elected to chair the panel for the coming year with Cllr Johnson as his deputy.

Details of the agenda and reports considered at the meeting can be found on the Hounslow Council web-site at <http://tinyurl.com/686abwo>.

At the meeting the councillors were given a verbal update on the progress of the restoration project:

The *Museum Feasibility Study* has been completed by a team led by Paul Jardine of Jura Consultants. It is now quite clear that the Museum will play a major role in the restoration scheme. Its work fits with the primary criterion of the Heritage Lottery Fund to help people to learn about their heritage. It has the potential to realise great public benefit from any restoration plan, particularly in an increased number of visitors. Its collection is of a much higher quality than public generally know, and deserves to be better used.

Therefore the lead architects for the project (Jestico and Whiles) are now drawing up plans for the use and refurbishment of the rooms and spaces within the Large Mansion. The meeting was also told that the museum has had its status confirmed in the national Museum Accreditation scheme.

The councillors were also told that a detailed survey has been commissioned of the condition of the buildings and structures in the Park. This work will be at three levels of detail – for the Large Mansion the survey will be an ‘intrusive’ full survey (for example, exposing the condition of timber joists in walls). For the Small Mansion, Stables, Temple, the Lodges and the

Potomac Tower, it will be a full survey but without affecting the fabric, and for the Popes Lane Main Gate, the historic boundary walls, the Kitchen Garden wall and smaller features like arches and the cast iron lamp standards, it will be an outline survey.

This work has been delayed by having to reshape the brief, but it is essential in being able to make more accurate estimates of the costs of repair. Temporary scaffolding is being set up around the Stables to allow safe inspection. The survey should be completed by September.

We also learnt of a possible change in the strategy of applying for support from the Heritage Lottery Fund. At the Advisory Panel meeting in April the idea was to bid for between £10m and £13m, which would have put Gunnersbury into the twice-yearly national competition for the largest of the HLF grants. This would have been a very high-risk strategy, as it would have been hard to meet the public benefit and value-for-money criteria with such a large bid. The Friends immediately advised against it.

The new strategy being considered is to apply for a *Heritage Grant* of £5m, which is the full amount within the band which most applicants aim for. This application would be for the conservation of some of the buildings and the development of the museum. Then a second application would be made for the restoration of the historic landscape under the *Parks for People* grant scheme – perhaps for £3-4m. The chances of success would be higher, though nothing is guaranteed and it all depends on the quality of the application and the nature of the other projects competing on the day. The deadline for a major grant application is in November, while for bids under £5m it will be in December. The decision about which strategy to adopt will be made at a meeting of the Project Board in July.

The other possible strategic change is the scope of the restoration project grant applications. When the project was launched it was to seek funding for the restoration of the whole estate. While a master plan for the whole estate – landscape, buildings, other garden features, the museum – will still be prepared, the tone of the discussion may be changing. There was mention of phasing, of never being able to do the whole park, of having to lose buildings in the poorest state of repair such as the Stables. This implies that the costs of restoration are as high as the costs calculated in the Options Appraisal on which we had the major consultation in the summer of 2009. It is interesting, for example, that the condition survey will not include a full intrusive survey of the Small Mansion, which suggests that cost of its restoration might not be included in the publicly funded project.

We were told that one of the big challenges is to find uses for all of the occupy-able buildings. Some uses which have been considered in recent years would not work without extensions or the exclusion of the public, which the project team is trying to avoid if at all possible.

The next meeting of the Advisory Panel will take place in the Terrace Room, Small Mansion at 6.30pm on 23 September 2011.

## CYCLING IN GUNNERSBURY PARK

On Friday 1 July the Joint Advisory Panel considered a proposal to designate two paths within the Park as permitted for cyclists. These would be the path running north-south behind the houses in Lionel Road, and the path running east-west from the south-eastern gate on the North Circular Road (the Gypsy gate) to the exit at the junction of Lionel Road and the Great West Road. During the meeting, these paths were described as 'commuter routes'.

A Transport for London grant could pay for the repair of these paths, and for the signage which showed that they were to be shared with pedestrians (with pedestrian priority). Signs would also declare that cycling was not permitted on any other paths. A proposal for a future circular route would be considered in the Regeneration Master Plan, as it likely to have to pass through the landscape of the historic core.

The proposal also noted that cycling occurs (and has for years) around all parts of the park and that it would be difficult to stop, that inconsiderate cycling behaviour is affecting the quality of some people's visits to the Park, that there have been conflicts, and that there have 'often' been instances of dogs chasing cyclists. The proposal also listed the health, congestion and CO2 reduction benefits of cycling.

The Advisory Panel agreed to include these proposals in the consultation process which will take place over the Master Plan during the summer, and take a decision on the basis of a more detailed paper when they meet again in September.

## THE NEW TREES



*Five new trees paid for by the Friends have been planted along the sports field (the playground lies to the left of the photo)*

## ADVISORY PANEL

There were over 50 expressions of interest in the proposed Advisory Panel and over 20 applications for places on it. We understand that interviews have been held and five people have been offered places on the Panel but the names have not yet been announced.

## VERNON RADCLIFFE

Vernon Radcliffe was the curator of Gunnersbury Park Museum from about 1958 until 1964, when he became curator of Newark Museum in Nottinghamshire. He stayed there until he retired in 1991. He was a Gunnersbury Friend for the last few years but died recently, aged 85.



*Vernon Radcliffe outside the museum in a newspaper cutting of 1964*

Robert Howard of the Nottinghamshire Local History Association gave a tribute at his funeral and wrote to let us know of Vernon's death. He told us "Vernon found running the museum 'frustrating' because it was then run by three councils whose senior officers and members were 'disinterested, despite my best efforts, and usually turned up at meetings, agendas and reports unread'. The Museum's electricity supply was so bad that he couldn't have the lights and a vacuum cleaner on at the same time and there was no interest in doing anything about the state of the building.

Instead, he immersed himself in local history activities and was a co-founder of the Acton Local History Group, where he lived. Vernon never lost his love for local history or small museums and was able to punch above his weight as a museum curator until he retired".

## CAPEL MANOR at GUNNERSBURY

The College's West London centre in the Walled Garden at Gunnersbury is putting on an advice session on Tuesday 12 July from 5.30 to 8.00pm. You can meet the staff and find out which course might be suitable for you

Visit their helpful website at <http://www.capel.ac.uk/gunnersbury> park to find detailed information about the courses they offer in animal care, arboriculture, countryside, floristry, garden design and horticulture.

## INFORMATION E-MAIL

The project team for the regeneration of Gunnersbury have set up an email address which you can contact to ask for an update on progress towards the HLF application: [Gunnersbury@ealing.gov.uk](mailto:Gunnersbury@ealing.gov.uk).

## FRIENDS' PARK WALK

The walk on 11 June attracted a dozen participants who explored the historic gardens around the two Mansions, the Japanese Garden, the Stables (where new and substantial metal railings now protect the site) and the Orangery. We discussed the Horseshoe Pond site and whether it would be worth reinstating this lake at the bottom of the slope behind the Mansions. We visited the children's playground and saw the newly-planted trees funded by the Friends.

## NEXT ISSUE

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

Contact Val Bott, Honorary Editor, 25 Hartington Rd, London W4 3TL [ValBott@museums.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:ValBott@museums.freeserve.co.uk)

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## IN THE MUSEUM

### EXHIBITIONS

**A Hive of Industry:** this exhibition of local products from the boroughs of Ealing and Hounslow is well worth a visit - and new acquisitions and information are added as people bring them in.

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

### SUMMER HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

#### Princess Amelia's Fan, 26 and 27 JULY 2011

One-day drama and craft workshops for 8 to 12 year olds – free but advance booking required as places are limited. Contact the Museum on 020 8992 2247 to book a place or request a booking form.

Meet Princess Amelia (she lived at Gunnersbury Park and was the daughter of George II), discover the fashions and pastimes of 18<sup>th</sup> century royalty, see some historical fans from the museum collection and make your own beautiful fan to take home with you.

### Museum Accreditation

In June the museum was awarded full Accreditation by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA). The MLA's Accreditation Scheme sets nationally agreed standards for UK museums.

The scheme began in the 1980s and has contributed to significantly to the improvement in quality of museums in the United Kingdom. To meet the requirements of the scheme, museums must demonstrate that they meet clearly defined standards on governance and management, services for users, visitor facilities and collections management. Accreditation is one of the requirements for many major sources of funding, including the Heritage Lottery Fund, so this is very important.

Gunnersbury applied to the scheme early in 2010 and was granted Provisional Accreditation for a year, allowing time to deal with some outstanding issues relating to staffing, governance and documentation. The MLA panel which met in May 2011 considered that these issues were being tackled and that Gunnersbury had demonstrated its commitment to managing collections effectively for the enjoyment of all local communities. As a result they were happy to award Full Accreditation status.

## 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. Thank to all those who have renewed promptly and especially to those who sent donations for our funds as well.

It is not too late to renew in time for the AGM on 17 July. 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.