

Another success for Gunnersbury!

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) announced on 26 July that Gunnersbury Park Museum is one of four heritage projects to which they have awarded Stage 1 funding under the *Heritage Grants* scheme.

The application process is in two parts. This grant of £386,400 will support the development of a full bid for the restoration of the Large Mansion and a major enhancement of the museum for Ealing and Hounslow. This phase will cost £543,600, with the rest of the funds coming from the local authorities. Once surveys have been completed and detailed plans drawn up, the Project Team will submit a Stage 2 application to the HLF. This will be for £3,425,000, part of the £9,368,603 we expect to be needed to complete the full project.

Taken with the recent news of the *Parks for People* award, this is the best news Gunnersbury has had for over 30 years. Although there are lots of hazards and difficulties ahead, this is the moment to contemplate the future for the Park and Museum – it has never looked better.

The Mansion is a very good example of an early 19th century country residence. It was about 30 years old when the Rothschilds bought it, made some changes and built some additions. They used Sidney Smirke who, though not as famous as his brother Robert, was a significant Victorian architect. The Rothschilds' internal decoration is still very visible in the grand rooms and their enlarged kitchen wing has been visited by thousands of school children since its 1980s restoration by the Friends.

The Large Mansion is listed at Grade 2*, particularly important buildings of exceptional interest and outstanding importance – only 4% of listed buildings fall into this category. It has, however, also been on the English Heritage *Register of Buildings at Risk* for many years. You don't need to be an expert in historic buildings to see from the outside what this means and, when it rains, the museum staff will confirm your opinion from the inside! The plan is to restore this building to the appropriate high standards, both inside and out.

The Museum was founded in 1929 with a donation of archaeological discoveries from Acton (the Sadler Collection). It now has a collection of some 40,000 objects covering the history of the area of the boroughs of Ealing and Hounslow and the people who lived (and live) here. It is one of the oldest and largest held by any London Borough.

Its particular strengths lie in its collections of costume and textiles, local crafts and industries, and South Asian artefacts and materials. Its collections include transport, weapons, toys, industry, domestic equipment, photography and entertainment (particularly Ealing Studios). It holds some stunning objects – everyone knows the Rothschilds' carriages (and the plan is to build a new display area for them in Fox's Yard by the Kitchens) – but do we know about the eleven swords made in Hounslow in the 17th century, most of them given by John Tofts White? Or the huge patchwork quilt made in about 1810 featur-



The remarkable pedlar doll

ing animals and birds, scenes from the Bible and figures in contemporary dress? Or the Chinese armorial porcelain? Or the marvellous pedlar doll with her basket of miniature goods for sale?

The Museum will take over all of the building, installing lifts and increasing the number of galleries from 7 to 20. There will also be a learning centre, study space and new storage, the last two accessible by appointment. At present there are perhaps 600 objects on display – by the end of the project we expect there will be at least 3,000.

Annual visitor numbers are expected to rise from 30,000 to 50,000, with a new outreach officer drawing in another 6,500 people who are new to museum visiting. The schools and learning programmes will grow. Today 9,000 schoolchildren visit in groups each year and many return with their families and friends.

There will be new opportunities for volunteering, training, internships and apprenticeships during the project, and a large outreach

programme, ensuring that people from across both boroughs and beyond can get involved and engaged, be consulted and help in planning and developing this project. Help will be needed in fund-raising, finding sponsors and attracting grants.

There is a lot to be done – but, at last, we can put our affection and enthusiasm into a project to re-create the Museum, and restore its Mansion, for perhaps three or four generations to come.

James Wisdom, Chairman

THE FRIENDS CAPEL MANOR PRIZE

Qamar Nur is the winner of this year's Gunnersbury award which is sponsored by the Friends of Gunnersbury Park. It is for the student who has done the most for Gunnersbury Park or for Capel Manor's Gunnersbury Park Centre.

Her citation said that, *as well as excelling in her own studies, Qamar has participated fully in the work of the Centre and has had a very positive influence on her fellow students. She is always willing to help others and has a very positive attitude to life.* Qamar Nur completed her Level 2 Diploma in Horticulture this academic year and next year will be starting the BTEC Level 3 in Horticulture.

She is pictured receiving her diploma from Tony Kirkham, Head of the Arboretum at Kew, in July.



OPEN HOUSE, SUNDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER 2012

There will be a lot to celebrate at Gunnersbury this year and the programme of events for Open House is a lively one, hopefully with musicians in the Large Mansion Dining Room, boats on the Pond and teas in the Orangery. Volunteers are needed to help oversee the Bath-house and the Temple, which will be open from 11am to 5pm. All volunteers are asked to do shifts of a minimum of 2 hours. Please contact Vanda Foster, Curator, at the Museum on 020 8992 1612 or email her at Vanda.Foster@laing.com if you'd like to help.

FRIENDS of GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

A warm welcome to those who have joined us recently and thanks to members who responded promptly to the renewal slip in the last *Newsletter*. To join or renew your membership please send your £5 cheque, made out to *The Friends of Gunnersbury Park & Museum*, to the Membership Secretary, 55 Park Drive, London W3 8N.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

All paid-up members are welcome at the Annual General Meeting. It will take place in the Terrace Room of the Small Mansion on Sunday 16 September from 2.30 to 4.30pm. With two successful HLF applications to celebrate we will also be discussing future activities.

FRIENDS' SKILLS AND EXPERTISE

Now that both the Park and the Museum have been awarded HLF grants, things will step up a gear.

We know many Friends would like to contribute something to these grand projects – but we don't know what talents and skills you are able to offer.

We would like to assemble an informal register of expertise so that we can call in help or advice at various stages of the work, so let us know by sending a note to The Chairman at 25 Hartington Rd, London W4 3TL or email on info@gunnersburyfriends.org.uk. We'll talk more about this at the Annual General Meeting.

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