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# NEWSLETTER

## **SPECIAL MEETING, 10.30am, SATURDAY 11 MAY**

Friends are invited to a meeting in the Terrace Room of the Small Mansion at Gunnersbury Park. This will be our first opportunity for discussing the proposals for the sale of the Small Mansion which the Boroughs of Ealing and Hounslow expect to take to public consultation meetings in late May or early June. The details of the proposals which have so far been made public are set out in this Newsletter.

## **SUBSCRIPTIONS 2013-14**

Subscriptions expired on 31 March and a renewal form is enclosed with this Newsletter. We are in the process of registering for Gift Aid and have added the option of paying your subscription or any additional donations by this means so that our registered charity can benefit from a tax refund on such payments. We hope as many Friends as possible will agree to do this. Please note: payments can be made on the day of the Special Meeting, which will be open only to paid-up members.

## **RENEWING THE CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND**

Hounslow Council is investing in a major transformation of the main playground in the Park at a cost of £215,000. Work began in mid April with the aim of completing the project in mid June,

Cllr Ajmer Grewal, Hounslow's cabinet member for leisure and public health, is quoted as saying, "A lot of work has been done to make sure we're not just replacing out-dated equipment, but creating a space for families to come and play in a safe, but stimulating, area. It's really important for us to make sure children have the chance to get outside with their parents and friends to play, explore and do fun things. We have worked closely with parents and local groups to make sure that the improvements reflect the character of the Park, and are designed to the highest standards. Once finished, the community will have a wonderful play area to enjoy for years to come."

The adventure play area will have 3 zones, making the experience more challenging as children progress to more demanding equipment. A boating-themed younger children's zone has been inspired by the Round Pond, with equipment for swinging, spinning, rocking, crawling and sliding.

The junior zone includes a tree-house with a gothic castle design, inspired by the Potomac Tower. It will also include a rope swinger, star swing, bridges, tunnel, activity net and a cableway. Imaginative play will be encouraged with a mound and boulders to clamber over.

The teen zone offers a range of challenging items including a dynamic climbing frame with a banister slide, an overhead roundabout, a double basket seat swing and two rocking items placed side by side to add a competitive edge. There will also be facilities for skating and ball-games.

The path that links the play areas is being refurbished to make sure there is access to the different play features, whatever the weather. Seating has been placed carefully throughout so parents can relax whilst children play. To find out more see <http://bit.ly/gunnersburypark>.

## LOST LAMP-POST

January saw the theft of one of the Listed 19th century lamp-posts from the drive in front of the Museum.

Sadly, though the lamp itself was a reproduction, its unusual four-legged stand was probably from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It has been replaced by a flood-light which highlights the Large Mansion when viewed from Popes Lane.

April saw another theft of lead from the back of the Large Mansion. The thieves were clearly interrupted as most of the lead was left on the lawn, along with a 20 foot ladder.

These losses are clear indicators that it would be worth installing CCTV at Gunnersbury.

## BRINGING IN NEW EXPERTISE

Since the announcement of the award of HLF development grants most of the work has focussed upon procuring consultants to support the projects. In 2012 HLF appointed as monitors Jane Alexander, Paul Drury, Katie Norgrove and Ellen Bramhill, but Jane Alexander was recently replaced by Mike Cook. The following appointments have been made:

**Rodney Melville and Partners** – *architectural design* This firm has worked on a number of museum and heritage projects in the Midlands, including Compton Verney, the Warwickshire Museum and the Museum of the Jewellery Quarter in Birmingham.

**Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA)** – *initial archaeological investigation of the whole estate* (see details below)

**Stuart Davies Associates** – *monitoring and evaluation of the project*

**Invigour** – *museum development* This is another Midlands-based firm specialising in management, development and project consultancy for business and public property. Rita McClean, former Director of Birmingham Museums, is a member of their team.

Interviews have also been held for quantity surveyors/cost consultants and in the near future specialists in collections management and interpretation will be appointed, along with a business planner.

Recruitment has begun for a Disability Access Forum to advise on the development of the projects; it will have its first meeting in May.

## ARCHAEOLOGY AT GUNNERSBURY

Jan Anderson, the Project Landscape Architect at Ealing Council who is overseeing the HLF-funded work, reports that a team from MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) will carry out an archaeological survey and write a report on the whole of the Gunnersbury Park landscape.

The study is part of the work funded by a *Parks for People* grant. Its results will inform future planning and generate ideas for long term park improvements, including the restoration of many unique heritage features.

Previously only a few small areas of the Park have been investigated, so a 'whole site' study is long overdue and vital in helping us understand its origins and history.

Over the next 10 months MOLA archaeologists will develop a comprehensive record of the Park's prehistory and history, followed by walk-over and geophysical surveys, and finally some test excavations to try and locate lost buildings and features. We hope these will include remains of the 1658-63 Palladian villa and earlier structures on the estate.

This programme will help with planning more detailed archaeological work in the later phases of the Gunnersbury project. The stories revealed and finds unearthed can contribute to the new exhibition in the Museum, which is a very exciting prospect.

There will be opportunities for local people to get involved at all stages of the investigation, with hands-on excavations, survey walks and workshops. MOLA will also be working with local schools, archaeology students and volunteers, giving them the chance to learn about archaeology, experience different methods of surveying and interpret the results. In the summer there will be a *Family Archaeology Day* when everyone can join in archaeological activities and learn more about the Park.

MOLA have led the field in investigating and unearthing London's archaeology since 1973. Earlier projects include Crystal Palace Park, The Lea Valley and the Olympics Park and Ealing's Walpole Park. MOLA is an independent charitable company employing more than 200 professional archaeologists, consultants and specialists; they specialise in innovative community engagement programmes. Find more information on the website [www.museumoflondonarchaeology.org.uk](http://www.museumoflondonarchaeology.org.uk). Further details and dates for the archaeological work and public events will be available soon and details will be posted on the Friends' website.

## SELLING OFF THE SMALL MANSION

On 25 January we published on the Friends' website the fact that Ealing Council's Cabinet had declared the AlphaPlus Group to be their 'preferred bidder' for The Small Mansion, to relocate their Falcons School for Girls from its current premises near Ealing Common. Since then Hounslow Council's Cabinet has taken the same decision. A press release issued on 25 March stressed the potential use of the school by the community on evenings, weekends and holidays, the track record of AlphaPlus in restoring heritage buildings and the injection of vitality into the Park from the school use, together with the investment in the restoration of the building.

### **The Gunnersbury Park Joint Advisory Panel, 19 April**

At this meeting we learnt that the school would have 200 pupils and aims to open in 2014. The impact on the listed building was said to be low, the major change being the installation of a staircase and lift. The impact on the landscape was the acquisition of 0.8 acres between the Mansion and Popes Lane for a fenced staff car park and play area for pupils. There will have to be a study of the traffic impact on the Park.

There was confusion about the notions of 'community use'. The school appears to be offering rooms (the drawing room and the dining room were mentioned) for hire when it is not using them – a normal practice with most schools, partly to earn money. There was no sense that 'community use' was going to be built into an entitlement, though we were told that a lease could be drawn up which guaranteed such a feature. Hiring out smart rooms in an early 19<sup>th</sup> century listed mansion might generate a trade in events – meetings, receptions, wedding meals etc. But the question was then raised as to whether this would challenge the business plan for restoring the Park and The Large Mansion, for which a catering income was part of the sustainability of the proposals. This issue has not yet been considered.

It was also reported that the Friends' committee was concerned that the school's ethos of exclusivity ran counter to the spirit behind the bids to the Lottery which was to make the Park and the Museum more open and accessible to all our citizens.

The AlphaPlus Group were promising to invest £5m to £6m in the building, for a 200-year lease and an as yet unspecified ground rent. It is hard to get a clear figure about how much of this investment is the core restoration of the building and how much relates to the cost of fitting it out for school use.

It was an uncomfortable meeting, as over 50 members of the public attended, wanting to make their views known, especially about the possible infringement of the covenants on the Park. The Councils have promised to conduct a 'public consultation', although the starting date for this is unknown. In reality it started with the publishing of Ealing Council's Cabinet Papers in January, continued by the March press release. So there was some frustration that the meeting was not designed to consult, only to observe. There is already some vigorous debate on the BrentfordTW8.com community forum. If the negotiations between the councils and AlphaPlus on issues like design, safety, traffic and public benefit are resolved, then the whole scheme will still have to get planning permission from Hounslow Council.

### **What do we know about AlphaPlus?**

*The Investors Chronicle* on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2012 reported: "The other bond to pique investor interest is a 5.75% issue (ISIN: XS0853358801) from an educational provider called AlphaPlus Schools. The bond is

interesting because it is the first on the market to be secured against £84m of underlying assets, putting the bond right at the top of the debt pyramid on a par with senior bank debt. AlphaPlus runs high-end schools in central London and is owned by the DV4 evergreen fund and advised by Sir John Ritblat's Delancey real estate development company. The company needs cash for expansion after a big increase in pupil numbers in London over the past few years. The basic finances look sound enough – the interest charge would be covered by more than three times Alpha's cash profits, for example - and the coupon is better than many recent unsecured offerings." The AlphaPlus website reports that the offer raised £48.5m.

Shore Capital reported: "...For the 5 years ending 31 August 2012, the number of pupils attending the Group's schools, colleges and nurseries increased by 29.5% from 2,800 pupils to 3,625 pupils. During the same period, average fees per pupil attending the Group's schools, colleges and nurseries increased by 25.2% from £12,748 to £15,966 p a."

What do we know about Delancey, the owners of AlphaPlus? The key figures are Sir John Ritblat, chairman of one of London's biggest property companies, British Land, from the 1970s until 2006, and his son James, who is chairman of Delancey, which owns Delancey DV4, the private property investment fund which owns AlphaPlus. Sir John is Chairman of the Board of Governors of AlphaPlus while James is a Conservative Party donor who lives in Chipping

Camden. There was quite a hoo-ha about their DV3 fund when *The Daily Mail* and *The Daily Telegraph* reported on 29 March 2012 that Andrew Mitchell MP, the then International Development Secretary, had investments in it when it avoided stamp duty on a major purchase. As part of its campaign against aggressive tax avoidance HMRC took up the case, lost it and is now appealing. The company is registered in the British Virgin Islands. So there is little doubt that the preferred bidder has the funds and a sustainable business plan. There has been no public discussion yet about what will happen when – for whatever reason – the leaseholder no longer wishes to operate a school.

### **The longer-term context**

This development started with the political volte-face at the end of the public consultation on the building of houses along the rest of Lionel Road. High-level discussions between both Councils led to an agreement that Ealing would invest £5m of capital with Hounslow matching it over the years with s106 funding, to restore the estate in phases rather than all at once, to get rid of The Small Mansion (and the costs of restoration and maintenance), to set up a Project Board of Ealing and Hounslow councillors and officers with English Heritage representation, and to rely heavily on Ealing's team of major project officers to prepare bids to the Lottery. From that point the plan was to offer the Small Mansion on a lease for development.

We do not know exactly when the school expressed an interest; over the years there have been preliminary discussions with many interested parties, but the possibility of a school has always been present in various recent reports. Its strongest rival was always a catering, functions and conferences operation – for example, the operator of Petersham Lodge in Richmond Park expressed interest in it a decade ago. A consultant's report on catering at Gunnersbury dismissed that option for The Small Mansion; the Friends' committee objected on the grounds that the analysis was inadequate. Nevertheless, a functions and catering plan for The Orangery and the upgraded café has been developed.

The Project Board pressed on with marketing the Small Mansion, and English Heritage paid for priority repairs to keep it watertight. The Friends' committee wrote stating that the timing was poor, on the grounds that there would be far greater interest in a year's time if Gunnersbury had won one or both of the Lottery bids. This point may have been borne out as only four parties actively registered an interest in the complex bidding process handled by Cushman & Wakefield – the school, a catering operation and two developers wanting to convert to flats. Despite requests, it has proved impossible to see the offer documents; they will only be shown to people who sign confidentiality and indemnity clauses. The GPJAP was told that the catering bidder withdrew during the process, and that only the school met all the criteria.

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## **CAPEL MANOR GUNNERSBURY, Open Day 11 May**

The College's West London Centre is in Gunnersbury's walled garden and students also work in the Park itself. The arboriculture courses take place at Horsenden Farm, Perivale, and they offer 14-15 year-olds in local schools practical tasters and training in horticulture alongside their school GCSE programmes.

Find out about their horticultural courses at the College's next Open Day, from 10am to 1pm on 11 May, the same day as our Special Meeting.

## **THE STABLES**

These buildings were marketed at the same time as The Small Mansion. A report to the 19 April GPJAP stated that no suitable proposals had been received for their future use.

We are very pleased to report that Hounslow Council has allocated £465,000, much of which will be spent on priority repairs to these important buildings. The work is being planned with the advice of English Heritage and the architects appointed for the HLF-funded works.

The significance of this move is that The Stables could be made secure and suitable as a temporary home for the contents of The Large Mansion which will have to be emptied for a major repair programme in the future.

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## **HOUNSLOW'S FUNDING**

We are delighted to report that Hounslow Council's Cabinet has agreed to allocate £2.3 million towards the Gunnersbury Park and Museum restoration projects.

This makes a major contribution to the total of partnership funding required to unlock the lottery grants and helps improve the balance between the contributions made by the two Councils which own the Gunnersbury estate.

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## **NEW GPJAP ROLE**

The GPJAP has co-opted a Friends' representative as a member of the Panel.

James Wisdom, the Friends' Chairman, took up this role at the Panel's last meeting on 19 April.

## THE POP-UP MUSEUM

Funded by Arts Council England, this project was run by museum staff and the new Outreach Officers in partnership with London Transport Museum's Acton Depot, which contributed their experience of working with young people.

A custom-made travelling display cabinet now houses a group of museum objects in secure pull-out drawers and cupboards. The design encourages people to enjoy discovering the hidden contents of the cabinet. One of the Museum's Education Officers recruited a team of Young Volunteers aged 16 to 21 to curate a mini exhibition in the cabinet. It includes artwork and poetry, their responses to the museum objects they selected.

The Pop-up Museum was first shown for 2 weeks in Hounslow's Treaty Centre in March, drawing a lot of interest from passers-by and raising the profile of the museum. After 3 days at Ealing's Central Library it returned to the museum for a celebration event attended by the funders and the Young Volunteers. It will remain there for the next few weeks. The Museum is now working with Lionel Road and The Grange Primary Schools whose pupils will select items for an exhibition in the cabinet.



*Exploring The Pop-up Museum at Hounslow's Treaty Centre*

## GRANTS TO THE MUSEUM

The museum has again received funding from the Ealing Decorative & Fine Art Society (a branch of NADFAS). They gave the museum £250 towards the purchase of a specialist conservation vacuum cleaner to be used for removing dust and mould from paper and textiles.

Their *Young Arts* section has also agreed to pay £460 towards the cost of resourcing a new summer holiday activity, *Gems & Jewels*, a children's art and craft workshop at The Museum, to be run by its education staff.

Participants will enjoy a tour of the museum building, exploring the history and architecture of the house and seeing the museum collections. Then they will have the opportunity to design and make a jewelled goblet, inspired by in the collections.

## HERITAGE GUIDES

Recently some of the Hounslow Heritage Guides had a behind-the-scenes tour to visit some of the museum collection stores, the Victorian kitchens and an empty flat that could become a museum learning suite in the future.

This group runs historic walks locally in the summer months and following their visit they are now able to tell their customers about the HLF-funded future plans for the Museum and Park.

## FAITH IN SUBURBIA EXHIBITION

A new exhibition, *Faith in Suburbia: a shared photographic journey*, has opened in the Museum and runs until 30 June 2013. Created for the Migration Research Unit at University College London, it is the outcome of a remarkable collaboration between senior citizens from six different faith communities in West Ealing and Hanwell.

UCL geographer Dr Claire Dwyer, and photographer, Liz Hingley, artist-in-residence, helped participants explore each others' religious buildings through photography. They selected images from amongst their photos for 6 exhibition banners, each representing a different faith. Also on show are portraits of those who took part and panels tracing religious change in the suburbs. UCL has provided a children's trail for the show at Gunnersbury.

'I hope the exhibition provides a catalyst for more interaction between faiths and that visitors to the exhibition will also share their own knowledge and experience of faith, migration and change in West London' said Dr Dwyer.

Photography proved an effective medium for learning what they had in common and sharing what they had discovered.

Ram, from the Shri Kanaga Thurkkai Amman Hindu Temple, felt that 'Visiting the mosque, the Sikh temple and other places of worship opened my eyes . . . and broadened my mind in many ways. If other people did this it could bring the world together in a small way or even a big way'.

*You can watch a short YouTube film about this project here:*  
<http://tinyurl.com/ctl5ttzh>.

## CURRENT & FUTURE GUNNERSBURY EVENTS

### **SURPRISES IN STORE! throughout 2013**

A quirky exhibition enabling visitors to discover objects from the museum collection with strong local connections that have rarely been shown at Gunnersbury before.

You can see the Robot of Death mask from Dr Who, Albert Dallory's penny-farthing bicycle, part of the original neon Lucozade sign from the Great West Road, mediaeval kitchenware from the manor of Northolt, film designs for Ealing Studios, clothes for maids and grand ladies and last, but not least, a flower-printed Victorian toilet.

### **THE CHELSEA FRINGE, 2 June 2013**

Between 18 May and 9 June a number of garden-related events takes place in London under this banner. Gunnersbury will be joining in on Sunday 2 June. The programme is still being finalised, but for details call 020 8825 6787 or email [gunnersbury@ealing.gov.uk](mailto:gunnersbury@ealing.gov.uk).

Bring a picnic to be part of *The Big Lunch* on the lawn. Join art and craft activities, follow family-friendly garden installation trails, tree walks and museum trails. Enjoy live music from local folk groups and the Hounslow Symphony Orchestra. Talks will cover the history of local nursery gardens, Gunnersbury's own gardens and unusual 18th and 19th century plants. And you may even meet the 'Rothschilds' Head Gardener'. <http://www.chelseafringe.com>

### **TICKET TO RIDE, 23 June 2013**

A special family-oriented cycling event, will be taking place at both Gunnersbury Park and Walpole Park, Ealing on 23 June, 10am to 4pm.

### **LONDON MELA, 1 September 2013**

This now well-established event will take place at Gunnersbury Park once again. A report about what is planned and how it will be managed will be taken to the next Gunnersbury Joint Advisory Panel on 7 June.

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### **CONGRATULATIONS!**

Lisa D'Agostino, one of the Museum's job-share Education Officers, has been studying part-time on a course at Leicester University.

Lisa has now been awarded an MA in Museum Studies, achieving a distinction.

### **MUSEUM OPENING HOURS**

The Museum is open daily from 11am to 5pm, April – October and 11am to 4pm, November – March. Admission is free.

Phone: 020 8992 1612 or (education and events) 020 8825 6787, or email the Curator, Vanda Foster, on [vanda.foster@laing.com](mailto:vanda.foster@laing.com).

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### **EDITOR'S NOTE**

We apologise for the longer gap than intended since the last issue. We have been updating the website - sign up as a subscriber there and you'll get an alert for each new post.

It has taken a very long time for detail of HLF-funded work to be made public but as much information as possible has been included in this issue.

The next issue is due in July; we welcome contributions by post to 25 Hartington Rd, London W4 3TL or email at [info@gunnersburyfriends.org](mailto:info@gunnersburyfriends.org)

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### **JOAN CATTERALL MEMORIAL**

Since the death of founder member of the Friends and Museum steward, Joan Catterall, there have been discussions as how best to commemorate her at Gunnersbury.

At the Joint Advisory Panel meeting on 19 April it was noted her family's preference would be for a room in the refurbished Museum to be named after her and future plans will consider how best to do this.

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### **FRIENDS' SUBSCRIPTIONS**

A warm welcome to those have joined us recently. Existing members can help by encouraging others to join. Subscriptions were due for renewal 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*. The £5 subscription is modest and a bigger membership means a better income and a stronger voice. Your donations are always welcome as well.

Please complete and sign the form, sending it with 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

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