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## FRIENDS' EVENT

**Presentation on the Gunnersbury Archaeology Project, Terrace Room, Small Mansion, Sunday 17 November 2013, doors open for light refreshments 2pm, presentation & discussion 2.15–3.15, optional site visit 3.15–3.45**

An illustrated presentation by the team from Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA). As part of the development of the Parks for People application (in 2014), MOLA were commissioned to study the Gunnersbury estate for its archaeological potential. The work involved a 'desk-top study' of previous archaeological and historical work, a walk-over survey, some geophysical investigations and finally some 15 trial trenches. **Everyone welcome - admission free**

The historical record tells us of a manor house in the middle ages, a grand Palladian villa with formal gardens in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a new landscape laid out in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, the building of two new mansions with their own grounds and gardens in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the changes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to make the park work for public recreation and during the second world war for the artillery defence of London.

On 17 November we will get the opportunity to hear about the work MOLA's team has been doing over the summer, and what



they think may be the potential for future work on the site. The photo shows a brick culvert and wall foundations in the excavations on the North Lawn. *photo © MOLA*

## GUNNERSBURY REGENERATION PUBLIC CONSULTATION

**Exhibition 12 November to 9 December**

An exhibition about the proposals will be on show out of doors near the Cafe and also in the Museum, with a chance to leave your responses.

**Public Presentation on the Regeneration Proposals 2pm, Saturday 23 November, Terrace Room, Small Mansion**

A chance to meet members of the team who have been developing the project and to hear from them about the proposals for Gunnersbury Park and Museum. There will be a one-hour presentation followed by time to talk informally to members of the project team.

An art workshop for children will be provided to enable them to have their say about the Park and Museum while their parents /carers attend the presentation.

**Booking for the presentation and the children's workshop is essential to ensure that there is enough space on 020 8825 6742 or [gunnersbury@ealing.gov.uk](mailto:gunnersbury@ealing.gov.uk).**

## GUNNERSBURY PARK UPDATE

The Gunnersbury Park Joint Advisory Panel (3 councillors each from Ealing and Hounslow, plus our Chairman, co-opted) met on 18 October. This report covers matters discussed there.

Two policemen attended for a discussion on security in the Park, based upon a short report included in the papers for the meeting. There is limited time for police to patrol the Park but they respond as quickly as they can to problems when called. The lack of any staff whose role is day-to-day management of the Park makes this a serious issue. Not only must Park visitors feel safe but poor security was felt likely to reduce the credibility of the funding bids. A security consultant is working on proposals, but the Panel felt it important to deal now with thefts from cars and from individuals, drunkenness, homeless people living in the Park and illegal fishing. Museum staff had suffered abusive behaviour, which raised the issue of the Councils' duty of care towards them.

A report will be brought to the next meeting by Richard Gill and his new manager, Sarah Ruane, exploring the use of fixed or mobile CCTV cameras, Ealing Council's experience of working with Park Guard security and whether Capel Manor students attending evening courses can have passes to avoid being locked in.

The principal discussion was around the progress of the two funding bids. Some of the earlier proposals have had to be altered, mainly because the costs of major works are proving higher than expected. The plans for toilets, kitchen and changing rooms behind The Orangery (to support events and functions) have been suspended. There are proposals for retaining three apartments on the upper floors of the Large Mansion for income, security and caretaking. This is a remarkable change, as the long term policy has been to remove such accommodation because of the risk it represents (eg, fire, water leakage, security) to the Museum. The search is still on for an off-site museum collections store. There are no proposals for the future of the Small Mansion. The timetable for the Heritage Grant application has changed – now 11 April for submission, decision on 22 July.

The broad outline of the plans for the Museum have been prepared. The major physical changes are the installation of a lift between the ground and first floor, and a platform lift from the first to an intermediate floor (the floor levels in the Large Mansion are not simple!). There will be new, introductory displays on the ground floor and the new galleries on the floors above will be more detailed and extensive. The themes will be the history of the people living in the two boroughs and Gunnersbury's special collections (it is famous, for example, for its textile collection). The Kitchen wing will be fully re-displayed, and the three grand rooms will house material about the estate and the Rothschilds; these rooms will be used for events as well, so the cases and displays will take that use into consideration.

Future meetings of the Panel will take place on the evening of 24 January and possibly (to be confirmed) on 4 April 2014. Agendas are posted on the Hounslow Council website at least a week beforehand and members of the public may attend. See <http://tinyurl.com/pq5e3n4>

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## NEW MEMBERS OF THE FRIENDS' COMMITTEE

Two Friends have joined the Executive Committee. At the AGM we elected Patrick Salaün and we ratified the co-option of Steve Larcombe who joined during the year. We asked them to write about themselves.

• **Patrick Salaün** writes:  
My association with, and love for, Gunnersbury Park goes back to my early childhood years in the Fifties when members of my family and I spent many happy days enjoying the numerous pleasures the Park offered. These included the boating pond, golf course and tennis courts. In those days the Park was well managed, with uniformed park keepers

patrolling on their bikes and keeping us youngsters in check. My twin daughters who live in South Ealing and North Ealing have also been regular visitors, especially to the Museum, and my three grand-children are now becoming fans!

Now retired, I had 30 years experience in business and retail banking and 10 years in the charity world on national fund-raising projects and hope that these skills prove useful to the committee in our objective of securing the future well-being of the Park for the Community.

• **Steve Larcombe** writes:  
I've recently retired from the oil and gas industry after more than 30 years. For 11 of those years I and my wife, Sonya Leydecker, who is the Friends' Honorary Treasurer, lived just a few hundred yards from Gunnersbury Park. This meant that the park became a regular haunt for me, whether for early morning fitness training, running up and down the flights of steps near the Museum, or Sunday afternoon strolls ending with refreshments in the café. More recently, though we've moved further away, I retain a close connection, visiting whenever the opportunity arises. What I love about the Park is the sense that it is for everyone and that there is something for everyone to enjoy. I hope that I can bring my business experience and love of the park together to serve the committee and FROGS more widely.

## BAT WATCHING AT GUNNERSBURY . . .

We assembled towards dusk at the locked gate of a west London park - some 50 or so adults and children. Bring a torch, we were urged. "I thought that we might need a wooden stake", a voice muttered from the crowd. "No no", said our group leader. "You clearly need to know some basic bat-facts".

"Who thinks bats are blind? They are not. They use their eyes to locate things until the daylight goes. Then they use their unique echo location to steer and hunt".

"Who are their main predators? Grey squirrels. Because of them, bats can no longer safely use woodpecker holes as dens. Curious squirrels come and find them - sometimes attack them and even bite off their front legs".

Amid much flashing of torches, we were firmly told: "Don't use your lamps as you will create night blindness". (How to expect all these kids not to! But, in fact, they were very well-behaved).

"The lake has the deepest water in west London, so be very careful NOT to fall in. Hold hands and keep close to mum. I don't want to have to go in after you", said the leader.

She then passed around a stuffed bat in a box. Tiny. It weighed only a few grams which is lighter even than a common mouse. Next bat detectors were handed out. "Where do you think the bats live? In the tree canopy. And they hibernate there too. Point the detector at a 45° angle up there."

The light was beginning to fade across the lake and there were perfect reflections of trees across the water. Now the resident ducks were flying away and also a heron. All of us were huddling close together with small kids at the front. It was getting darker all the time. The tension was rising.

Then, as we all were looking out over the lake, people began to shout out. "There's one!" "There's another....and another", while the bat detectors were making rapid clicking noises. The bats were now moving very fast, swooping down in big arcs over the water, then up again into the sky like miniature Spitfires giving a display.

Even the leader was getting excited. She explained that the bats come out to feed. Then they make lots of social calls. This enables them to mate before they hibernate in the winter time. Come the spring, baby bats are born, after a 6 week gestation period. Then it all begins all over again.

Tired but contented, we trotted off home, more 'bat-wise' than we had been two hours earlier. It was a very special evening out.

*Michael and Jill O'Connor 15 Sept 2013*

## RESEARCH GROUP

The Friends Committee has convened a small group of experienced local historians to research aspects of the history of the Gunnersbury estate.

Chris Hern, who chairs the Hounslow & District History Society, has been to Norfolk Record Office to see records of Gunnersbury's 17th century owners (they also owned Blickling Hall). David Bays and David Bush of the Acton History Group, with Val Bott of the Brentford & Chiswick Local History Society, have spent days working through the 17th, 18th and 19th century deeds which came with the purchase of the estate in the 1920s. Peter Hounsell will be looking at the 20th century documents for the history of the public park. Web-searches have already revealed how useful digitised archives and online catalogues are.

A great deal has been copied or photographed and now the research can begin in earnest. The group aims to contribute information for the future presentation of the landscape and mansions as well as past owners, guests and workers!

*Val Bott*

## CAPEL MANOR GUNNERSBURY AWARDS 2013

David Bush (Membership Secretary) and Val Bott (Newsletter Editor) represented the Friends at the Awards Presentation at Capel Manor's Gunnersbury Centre in the summer. Every year the Friends fund a prize for the student who has done most for Gunnersbury and, on the day, Val found herself presenting it. The annual event is a warm and sociable one, with excellent refreshments and a chance to explore the site and meet students.

The College selected Ellen Larkin for this award, and gave her vouchers to spend as she wishes. We offer our congratulations to her here, and **Tony Monaghan** of the Gunnersbury Centre has written as follows:

Ellen has studied horticulture for 2 years at Capel Manor at Gunnersbury Park. She started on the Access course and she progressed to Level 1. Ellen was a very quiet student when she arrived but as time went on she became more confident and self-assured. Her love of gardening was obvious to all.

She carried out with other students several projects in the Park, ranging from pruning the rose baskets near the Large Mansion to planting the long border in the Bowling Green. For her enthusiasm and her example to other students, Ellen is this year's winner of our Gunnersbury Award.



*Ellen Larkin*

## EXHIBITIONS and ACTIVITIES at GUNNERSBURY

### SURPRISES IN STORE!

This quirky exhibition runs throughout 2013 and shows museum objects with local connections that have rarely been displayed before: the Robot of Death mask from Dr Who, Albert Dallory's penny-farthing bicycle, part of Lucozade neon sign from the Great West Road, mediaeval kitchenware from Northolt Manor, film designs for Ealing Studios, clothing for maids and for grand ladies and a flower-printed Victorian toilet pedestal.

### LICENSED TO SELL

The exhibition of charming watercolours of local pubs by J T Wilson continues till 10 November. Donated by Andrew Pears, soap manufacturer and local magistrate, they hung in Brentford Magistrates Court until it closed, when they were presented to Hounslow's Local Studies Collection.

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

### EDITOR'S NOTE

The next issue of the Newsletter will be assembled in January 2014. Your contributions, perhaps short articles, your reviews of Gunnersbury events or exhibitions, your photos and memories of Gunnersbury - are always welcome.

Please send them to the Editor, 25 Hartington Rd, W4 3TL or by email to [info@gunnersburyfriends.org](mailto:info@gunnersburyfriends.org)

### STIR-UP SUNDAY

Join the servants in the Victorian kitchens as they prepare for the Christmas festivities! Traditional Christmas preparations began on the last Sunday before Advent, known as Stir-Up Sunday.

The kitchens will be decked with holly and ivy to put you in the Christmas spirit, and participants can help pound the sugar and spices, stir the plum pudding and make a wish! Children must be accompanied by an adult

**Sunday 24 November, 3 sessions: 11.30am-12.30pm, 1-2pm and 2.30-3.30pm**, free, advance booking essential

### THE WEST LONDON FOLK BAND

Concert with a seasonal theme performed by this a lively community folk band **Sunday 1 December at 2pm**, in the Museum, free, no advance booking

### DINING WITH THE VICTORIANS AT CHRISTMAS

Food historian Dr Annie Gray will describe what was on the table and how it was cooked in the era of Mrs Beeton and Charles Dickens, and consider how it influenced what we eat at Christmas today.

A regular panellist on Radio 4's *Kitchen Cabinet*, Annie has also appeared on such programmes as *The Great British Bake Off*. She will provide a demonstration and tasting of a lost classic recipe, giving you a taste of Victorian Christmas.

**Sunday 8 December at 2pm** £10 pay in cash on the day, advance booking essential

Contact [lisa.d'agostino@laing.com](mailto:lisa.d'agostino@laing.com) or call 020 8992 1612 / 2247 to book places at Stir-Up Sunday and Annie Gray's talk

### THE BIG STORM

While compiling this Newsletter it has not been possible to explore the whole of the Park to assess the impact of the huge storm which battered southern England in the early morning of 28 October.

However, we are pleased to report that the early indications are that there was no major damage. A lot of smaller branches fell but it was not necessary to close the Park to visitors during that day; as one of the few parks not to close, Gunnersbury was able to welcome more dog walkers than usual!

### FRIENDS' SUBSCRIPTIONS & DONATIONS

A warm welcome to new members and our thanks to the large number of members who have signed up for Gift Aid. Do continue to encourage others to join - the £5 subscription is modest and more members ensure a better income and a stronger voice.

A membership application form can be found on our website; send your form with a cheque made out to *the Friends of Gunnersbury Park & Museum* to The Membership Secretary, Friends of Gunnersbury Park & Museum, 55 Park Drive, London W3 8N.

Funds are always needed to support the Park and Museum - please consider sending an additional donation or making a bequest to the Friends. In the near future we will identify and promote the opportunities for contributions from individual donors to support specific elements of the regeneration projects.

**Registered Charity no 286310**