

# FRIENDS OF GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

## NEWSLETTER **NO 99** DECEMBER 2014



### **MUSIC IN THE MUSEUM 21 December**

The lively *West London Folk Band* will be performing in the Museum on Sunday 21 December from 12 noon to 1.30pm with tea/coffee and mince pies during the interval. The concert is free of charge, with no advance booking, and seats will be allocated first come first served.

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### **MUSEUM CLOSING FOR REFURBISHMENT on 23 December**

Friends may wish to pop into the museum before it closes for refurbishment. This will effectively create a completely new museum, due to open in 2017. Following Vanda Foster's retirement in the summer, two staff have been appointed for 6 months to support the refurbishment work. Project Curator, Julia Tubman, a conservator, and her assistant, Lucy Smith, a curator, will help to develop the interpretation scheme and oversee the removal of the collections from the Large Mansion. These will be going to a new long-term store off-site; this is being fitted out to provide suitable conditions for the collections, and will have room for volunteers to work on them and for groups to visit.

The museum education team is being transferred to Ealing Council and will continue to offer an education and events programme. They will be based in the Small Mansion, whose interior is currently being repainted. They will be developing new areas of learning, creating workshops which encourage children to engage with aspects of local and national history, expanding the school loan box service and creating new online resources for local history study. At the time of writing, other staff are hoping to be re-deployed and we wish them well for the future.

Vanda Foster has been engaged as a freelance adviser to research images and information on the history of the Park and the Large Mansion for future interpretation. She says, "I have had chance to read numerous Rothschild letters and revisit oral histories from the Gunnersbury collections. I have discovered many interesting details about servants, food, gardens and the animals in the Park. And it appears that the Rothschild Archive had no idea that polo was played here!"

In addition, Vanda reports that "Jacqui Pearce, Heather Heath and Gunnersbury volunteer, John Marshall, organised a team of volunteers from local archaeology societies who have been working in the Dining Room on 100 boxes of sherds from Pinner, "temporarily" stored at Gunnersbury by the West London Archaeology Field Group. They have now been sorted, weighed and re-boxed; some items will be retained for the handling collection, some are going to the Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) store in Mortimer Wheeler House. This has been useful experience for the volunteers and has found a home for what was a problem collection that did not belong to Gunnersbury".

In relation to the Park, meetings have been held with English Heritage to develop proposals for the café and carriage building. The design team are creating drawings and specifications to send out to prospective contractors with relevant experience of heritage sites. In advance of the re-creation of the western half of the Horseshoe Pond, MOLA have excavated one side of its Middle Bridge to assess its condition; they found the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century concrete pond liner and sections of earlier concrete edgings.

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### **FRIENDS' ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

At our Annual General Meeting in September members approved the review of the past year and our accounts and the existing committee was re-elected. Though healthy balances were reported on our investments, all agreed we must ensure that our subscription income covers the costs of running our charity. Many members generously send donations in addition to their subscription payments and we are slowly sorting out registration for Gift Aid. However our subscription fee has remained at £5 since 1981 and after discussion it was agreed unanimously that we should increase this to £10 from 1 April 2015.

## **GUNNERSBURY PARK JOINT ADVISORY PANEL, 17 October 2014**

**Finance:** Following the award of both HLF grants the 2 councils have confirmed their funding of the regeneration project. Ealing has maintained the £5m it had already offered and Hounslow will contribute new sums totalling £2.698m in addition to its original commitment to spend £1.844m of capital and £250,000 of s106 money. Agreement has also been reached on the tendering process for the works.

**Project update:** GPJAP agreed that in considering future use of buildings in the Park where money has been spent but which are not part of the HLF -funded projects (particularly the Stables, the Small Mansion and New Lodge) short-term as well as longer term options should be considered. Bringing them into use could assist in preventing decline and vandalism. They suggested groups like the local Woodcraft Folk who were looking for space might be interested and the Panel asked Richard Gill to investigate options and to ensure that utilities that made the building usable were in place.

**Keeping people informed:** James Wisdom, Chairman of the Friends and a co-opted member of GPJAP, asked that efforts should be made to ensure that the public were aware of what was happening or about to happen at Gunnersbury. He knew from past involvement with works at Chiswick House Grounds that inexpensive laminated notices made an enormous difference in diffusing anxiety and minimising mistaken opposition. For example, nowhere had the case been made for the building a new café rather than refurbishing or re-using existing buildings and this had caused concern at the recent Friends AGM. GPJAP also noted the need for a single, regularly updated Gunnersbury project website linked to that of the Friends, in place of the poorly updated Council sites.

**Events in the Park:** The Panel requested a report to the January meeting from council officers on the Mela and other events in the Park. The Panel wished to understand what gain there had been to the Park from this event and if not, an explanation as to why there was no benefit to the Park from the event. The report should include other aspects of income to the park. It was agreed that Ealing and Hounslow Councils should consider what events they wished to see in the Park in the future.

The Panel agreed that Security and an update on liaison with the Safer Neighbourhood Teams in Brentford and Ealing should be on the agenda for the next meeting.

**Fitness and Health:** In considering sports options for the Park, James Wisdom urged that exercise and promotion of good health, for example walking and outdoor exercise equipment, should be considered alongside traditional sports as attracting a wider group of citizens, including older people. This was welcomed by the Panel which asked Sarah Ruane and Richard Gill (Hounslow officers) to take to the Project Board a proposal to include these wider aspects of sport, exercise and well-being.

The Panel agreed to hold future meetings on Friday, 30 January 2015 and Friday, 17 April 2015 at 6.30 pm. The agenda and minutes are the Hounslow Council website here: <http://tinyurl.com/o4w39ge>.

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## **GOVERNANCE AT GUNNERSBURY**

Important changes in the way the Gunnersbury estate (Museum, Park and Buildings) is managed are being planned. The bid to the HLF and Big Lottery proposed a Joint Venture Company to take over the estate. It was clear at the last public meeting before the bid was submitted that this was no more than a notion, as Ealing's senior officer was unable to discuss it in detail. After the award was made, Ealing's Cabinet was told (16 September) that "the establishment of a new governance model is a requirement of the HLF grant". The Project Board asked David Lillicrap, Head of Project Management at L B Ealing, to prepare a report on possible models – this was presented as Appendix A of item 15 at Ealing's Cabinet meeting on 21 October 2014 (you can read it here: <http://tinyurl.com/pmwn6py>).

The proposal now agreed by both Councils is to establish a Community Interest Company. This would be a body of Directors drawn from council nominees and members of the public, perhaps with particular skills, experience and interests. It would be a company (with a memorandum and articles of association) registered at Companies House, "for the benefit of the community". It would not be a charity registered with the Charity Commission and would not get the tax benefits of a charity. The expectation is that it would exist as a shadow organisation until the Councils have completed the two HLF-funded projects, and then in March 2017 it would take over the running of the estate and the



employment of the people working in the Museum and the Park. It would receive financial support from the two councils - both Councils have had to agree to maintain the restored estate for 25 years.

The next news we expect on the CIC is for a draft of its memorandum and articles to be approved by the Councils. This will be important because it will provide a description of its objectives and the powers it intends to take to discharge them; it will effectively be the constitution of the new body. We then expect an advertisement to go out for Directors, though this may happen the other way round - Directors recruited before formation - so they can have a say in writing its constitution. The timetable is intended to be the first quarter of 2015. This CIC is a new and untried model and presents various risks. The number and power of members is an issue - a CIC can be formed with the number of members limited to the number of Directors, and Directors can have the power to appoint or re-appoint - so the model of a large membership annual general meeting need not be used. Directors can draw salaries. Fortunately, a company limited by guarantee has no shareholders wanting dividends. If the business plan for the estate is too optimistic and if the Directors are not able consistently to commit the time and energy, then a CIC is going to be hard to rescue. Residents of Hounslow have lived through something similar with Community Initiatives Partnerships which ran its leisure and cultural services.

Perhaps the biggest future hazard for this scheme is the "democratic deficit". The CIC will be a private company, with no formal obligation to engage with the public and the users of the Park and Museum. Of course, it would be foolish not to do so, but its meetings and records will be confidential and we will learn of its intentions through its announcements. This is especially troubling because there seems to be no long-term future for publicly-funded non-statutory services through local authorities. The hope for Gunnersbury will lie with the people who visit it and enjoy it, who engage with it and feel responsible for it, whose lives have been enriched by the Park and the Museum. To ensure longevity, the Directors are going to have to be very clever in handling notions of ownership and commitment between themselves and the public.

When the CIC takes over running the estate in 2017 the 1960s agreement between the councils will be terminated. At their last meeting the Gunnersbury Park Joint Advisory Committee (of councillors) requested that the Panel should remain in existence until this 2017 handover.

In the meantime, a second body has been formed. This is the Gunnersbury Museum & Park Development Trust (DT); a company has been formed in this name but it has not yet been registered as a charity. It will be a fundraising body and the papers relating to the funding strategy show that its first task will be to raise £1,470,000 towards the Museum restoration project. The two councils have recently invited applications for trustees. The following text comes from their formal announcement:

Up to four appointments will be made to join the board of what will be the Gunnersbury Museum and Park Development Trust. Trustees will play an important role contributing to the multi-million pound redevelopment; ensuring the Grade II listed, 186 acre site fulfils its potential to become a major heritage destination and community asset. Trust members will be expected to use their skills and networks to raise donations and funds to help conserve, transform and make more accessible the heritage, landscape, park land and sporting legacy of the estate. The Trust and its members will be supported by the combined professional bid-writing team from Ealing and Hounslow Councils. Applicants will need to demonstrate a commitment to West London, passion for Gunnersbury Park and its spectacular heritage and have the ability to network and raise funds. As the Leader of Hounslow said: "The role will require heavy-duty fundraising skills". Read more about this at [ealing.gov.uk/gunnersbury](http://ealing.gov.uk/gunnersbury), but if you wish to apply, don't delay - despite Christmas, the deadline is 5 January.

Drawing on earlier documents about this Development Trust, we expect the aims and objects to be something like: "The Development Trust will advance the educational, community and public benefits at Gunnersbury through fund-raising for activities and projects related to Gunnersbury. The Trust has been established for public benefit to advance education, the provision of facilities at Gunnersbury available to all sections of the community and other charitable purposes consistent with these aims." These aims would be similar to those of the Friends, which are: "a) for the public benefit to secure the preservation, protection and improvement of Gunnersbury Park and buildings of historic interest therein, b) to advance the education of the public in the history, geography, natural history and



architecture of the park, c) to advance the education of the public by promoting, supporting, assisting and improving Gunnersbury Park Museum, and d) to provide, or assist in providing, facilities for recreation or other leisure-time occupations in the interests of the social welfare of the public.”

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## CHISWICK ROUNDABOUT BUILDING PROPOSALS

We understand that the proposed huge structure clad in LED lights at Chiswick Roundabout may soon be superseded by a planning application for an even bigger tower. No application has yet been submitted but, as we fear this will make a substantial visual intrusion upon the Park, we will be examining it closely.

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## FARNELL BEARS

Before she retired, Vanda Foster told us that she hoped the Museum would one day acquire a Farnell teddy for its collection; in fact the museum has no toys by this Acton manufacturer yet. As vintage teddy bears have become very collectable, they are fetching rather high prices. We discussed this at the AGM and agreed that we should first help raise awareness that the Museum would love to have one, hoping that someone may be prepared to make a gift. If this did not succeed, we would be prepared to lead a campaign to raise funds for a purchase, giving Museum supporters the chance to help buy a special bear!

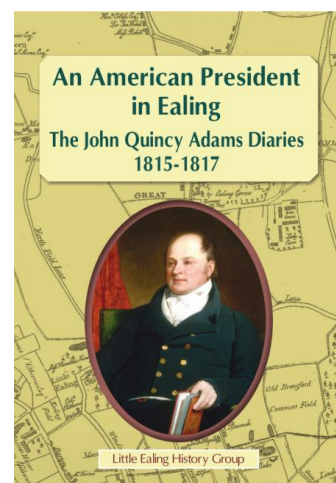
In 2012 Ealing Civic Society (ECS) placed a commemorative plaque for Winnie-the-Pooh on the Victorian east wing of The Elms, within the grounds of the Twyford C of E High School. This was the site of J K Farnell & Co's Alpha Works where their bears were first manufactured in 1908. Daphne Milne, wife of the author A A Milne, had bought one of Farnell's 'Alpha' teddy bears from Harrods in August 1921 for the first birthday of her son Christopher Robin and it seems to have inspired the Pooh books.

We have agreed with ECS to arrange together an evening event about Farnell at Twyford School next year. So far we have had advice from the Museum of Childhood at Bethnal Green and your editor has been studying closely Kathy Martin's book on Farnell Bears! Meanwhile, do enjoy exploring a collector's website at [www.teddybear-museum.co.uk](http://www.teddybear-museum.co.uk) and a specialist dealer's website at [www.danielagnew.com](http://www.danielagnew.com).

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## AN AMERICAN AT GUNNERSBURY

For the last 10 years the Little Ealing History Group has been studying the diaries of John Quincy Adams, 6th president of the United States. They have now published a handsome book focussing on the period 1815 to 1817 when Adams and his family were living in Ealing. This readable and attractively-designed little book reveals one of those social networks which makes sense of the life of a parish in the past. In his diaries Adams turns his outsider's eye onto the community in which he had come to live, recording details about his life and his family. He offers an affectionate glimpse of the way the wealthier families of the neighbourhood (including the owners of the two new mansions at Gunnersbury) welcomed him and his family to teas, dinners and even a Gunnersbury cricket party. You can buy the book by mail order here: <http://littleealinghistory.org.uk/adam> or from local shops listed on the same web page.



## FRIENDS of GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

The next Newsletter, our 100th, will be compiled in March 2015. Short articles, Gunnersbury stories, photos and memories are welcome. Send contributions to The Editor, 25 Hartington Rd, W4 3TL or to [info@gunnersburyfriends.org](mailto:info@gunnersburyfriends.org). Subscriptions fall due on 1 April and renewal forms will be sent with the next Newsletter. Do encourage others to join, or buy membership as a gift, as greater numbers ensure a stronger voice. Send the form from our web-site with a cheque to *Friends of Gunnersbury Park and Museum* to the Membership Secretary, 55 Park Drive, London W3 8ND. **Regd Charity No 286310**

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