



UNWRAPPING THE LARGE MANSION



For 18 months the Large Mansion has been surrounded by scaffolding, constructed to be free-standing so that work could proceed on the whole of the render of the walls, and wrapped for protection. Part of the wrapping has been taken down and you can see the high quality restoration work carried out by Quinn, the contractors. We reported in the last *Newsletter* that the joinery was going to be painted in a light brown instead of the white gloss used in the 20th century and this too is now visible at the western end of the building. It offers a glimpse of what is to come. A small hole beside the metal mesh fencing along the terrace reveals red/orange brick and lime mortar, possibly a remnant of the construction of the mansion built here between 1658 and 1663.



Near the main car park the huge overgrown conifer hedge beside the bowling greens has gone, and work has begun on the laying out of new tennis courts, due to be completed in July.

GIFT OF LIME TREES

Philippa Dolphin writes: This year Ealing Civic Society celebrates its 50th anniversary; we have planned a number of special events including lectures, a walk and (hopefully) a lunch for members. The Society's website has been newly revamped and modernised for the anniversary; check details at ealingcivicsociety.org/events.

We have decided that we would like to donate some trees to mark the event and Gunnersbury Park is the obvious recipient because of its major renovation programme.

Thanks to advice from head gardener, Chris Ellis, we have agreed to fund the purchase and planting of four silver lime trees (*tilia tomentosa*).

These beautiful deciduous trees can grow to 35 metres in height and they have a wonderful scent in summer. They will be planted in the autumn at the top of the playing fields.

Chris tells us they will make a great landscape feature: 'This south facing sunny aspect is a key feature for these trees as they turn the back of their silver leaves towards the sun'.

We are delighted to be able to celebrate our 50th anniversary in this way and look forward to seeing the trees grow as we head into the next decade.

NEW CEO ARRIVES

On 24 April David Bowler, Gunnersbury's new Chief Executive, took up his post. He will be running Gunnersbury's Community Interest Company (CIC). A Hanwell resident since 1999, he knows Gunnersbury as a place where he has enjoyed walking his dog. However, when he submitted to a short interview for the *Newsletter*, he did admit to never having visited the Museum!

Since accepting the post, he has been getting to know his new domain. Indeed, some of you may already have met him in the Park recently, where he has been chatting to Park users and asking what they love – and what they don't – about the place. He is looking forward to working with the Gunnersbury team and listening to their ideas and aspirations. He is keen to learn quickly what the estate and museum have to offer.

David grew up in Manchester and has a History degree from Hull University. Though he subsequently studied for a post-graduate Certificate in Education he did not take up a career in teaching. He later he obtained a Master's degree in Urban Regeneration and this has informed his work in various roles in the public and charity sectors. He has also been involved in local community organisations relating to the arts and has served as a school governor.

He has even set up another community interest company, and believes that this form of social enterprise will be very important for Gunnersbury, especially because the loss of local authority funding since 2010 has placed many other parks and museums in jeopardy. His experience tells him that the expenditure of huge sums of money on improving a place is not enough unless accompanied by a sense of purpose and strong cultural and community values.

In his stewardship of Gunnersbury David Bowler expects his work to embrace everything from keeping an eye on day-to-day needs on site to ensuring that the strategic management of the new CIC is strong. He is aware that he has to ensure a balance between the CIC's social and cultural role and the business activity which it has to undertake to survive. His style is to work in partnerships and he commented that he hoped to benefit from having a well-established Friends' organisation to help him understand how people see Gunnersbury.

GUNNERSBURY PARKRUN

A huge crowd of participants joins this free 5-kilometre timed run which takes place every Saturday. It starts at 9am at the top of the Park.

To take part you must register in advance on their website at parkrun.org.uk/gunnersbury

CAPEL MANOR AT GUNNERSBURY

The next **Open Day** at Capel Manor College's Gunnersbury site inside the walled garden takes place on **Saturday 29 April 2017** between 10am and 3pm, admission free. This provides an opportunity not only to see the work of the College but also the space inside the 1759 walls. It is a great opportunity to buy some of the plants propagated there which will be on sale.

And to discover the range of horticulture and animal care courses at Capel Manor at Gunnersbury go to the next **Advice Evening on Wednesday 17 May 2017** from 5pm to 7.30pm.

REGENERATION BRIEFING MEETING

The Project Team delivered another updating session at the Old Actonian Sports Ground on 30 March. The rather large file of the presentation slides is on our website at <http://tinyurl.com/k7yxj2e>.

Some significant points arose from the presentation. The first was that the Chief Executive of the Community Interest Company which will run the estate had been appointed. The CIC has 3 directors (2 senior officers from LBs Ealing and Hounslow and the Chair of the Development Trust) and others would be recruited soon.

During the questions we learnt that, despite this being part of the plan for many years, the golf course will not be moving to the top of the large field. It appears that a smaller, more modern, unfenced form of golf is being discussed as an alternative. There was a long exchange about investment in free and open exercise facilities – trim trails, outdoor gym equipment etc – for people who did not want to pay to use the equipment inside the planned sports hub building.

We learnt that Parkguard has succeeded in reducing the number of security incidents, and that it was still important for park users to report problems.

The recent attempt to offer the Small Mansion and the Stables, either separately or together, to an organisation which could take them 'off the books' by restoring them and running some appropriate activity in them had not succeeded. The next approach is likely to be undertaking a feasibility study to recommend how they could best be used, then seeking potential partners for detailed discussions. Years of inadequate maintenance make the restoration very expensive, and both Councils insist they cannot fund this work.

The Business Planning slide showed estimates of 1 million users each year, with half of those using the sports facilities. It showed an

expected increase in Museum visitors each year by 20,000 to 50,000 and a rise in earned income from £203,250 to £1,275,146 with Museum and Park staff increasing from 9 to 27 people.

We were shown images of real progress such as the new playground equipment near the café, the redesign around Princess Amelia's grotto, work on the new nature trail and the Community Kitchen Garden, planned to open shortly. Clay from the V&A's excavations now lines the Round Pond; the new Horse-shoe Pond is being filled.

We also saw artists' impressions of the Museum displays and the Carriage display beside the café. Completing the Large Mansion, and fitting out the museum displays, means a likely re-opening date of spring 2018. *James Wisdom*

FUND-RAISING FOR A MUSEUM ACQUISITION

The Gunnersbury Development Trust is working with the Curator, Julia Tubman, to raise funds for a fabulous enamel panel made by Edith and Nelson Dawson who lived and worked on Chiswick Mall. It depicts the extraordinary story of St Simon Stylites, a 5th century Christian hermit. He spent decades on top of a column near Aleppo where his religious devotion earned him fame and drew crowds.

Edith made the enamel in 1903 and Nelson's silver and mother-of-pearl mount was hall-marked in 1923. That year they closed their studio and sold the contents. Their daughter, Rhoda Bickerdike, was a member of the Gunnersbury Museum staff in the 1960s; she donated a collection of their papers, prints and photos. As the Museum has none of their enamels or metalwork this acquisition would fill a significant gap. Several others working locally were prominent in the Arts and Crafts Movement – for example, the Museum will show some of Ealing Council's collection of the Martin Brothers' stoneware pots, made in Southall at about the same time.

The dealer who is selling the panel has reduced his price by £10,000 to £28,000, to help the Museum, and has agreed to retain it while funds are raised. Bids for grants are being submitted to the Art Fund (for £11,000) and the V&A Purchase Grant Fund (for £14,000). The latter requires a contribution of 'local funding' and for an object at this price £3,000 is needed. Promises of £1,700 have been made so far. If you can help with a donation please contact info@gunnersburyfriends.org.



FRIENDS' GRANT FOR CONSERVATION

Some additional elements of conservation work in the north-east corner of the Park were not included in the works funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. As these are important, Historic England offered £73,512 towards the costs. The Project Board is already juggling the funds to deal with unpredicted items of work at Gunnersbury and could not easily provide the 'partnership funding' required to release this grant, so they asked whether the Friends could help.

The committee has agreed to contribute £6,616 to enable the work to proceed. It includes the removal of asbestos from the garden grotto beside the bath-house and replacing part of the brickwork there, rebuilding a buttress to the Water Tower, works to strengthen the terrace arches and increasing the thickness of the structure of the Upper Terrace wall for structural reasons, improvements to roof drainage and graffiti removal at the Bath-house, some ironwork, and support for the overhanging arches to the Gothic Ruins.

We have asked that our contribution should be acknowledged on signs on the mesh fencing around the works and will pay when the work is completed.

NEWSLETTER 107

This will be sent out in July. Send items for inclusion to the Editor at info@gunnersburyfriends.org or 25 Hartington Road, W4 3TL.

gunnersburyfriends.org

The Friends organisation is a registered charity no 286310

COMMUNITY GARDENING

In March Gunnersbury's new garden apprentice and some of the Capel Manor Level 1 Horticulture students planted traditional varieties of apple and pears in the Heritage Orchard.



Peeping over the Victorian wall of the Small Mansion kitchen garden you can see the progress in the Community Kitchen Garden which will open in the near future. You can join in their Big Lunch on 17 June - we will place details on our website.

SECURITY CONTACT DETAILS

These phone numbers will be useful if you need to report a problem or incident at Gunnersbury Park. Gunnersbury is wholly within the borough of Hounslow, so that organisation manages the Park's daily activities.

Hounslow's Civic Centre general enquiries phone number is 020 8583 2000. It is staffed from 9am. But if you are phoning during the week after 5pm, or after 4.45pm on Fridays and over the weekend, you will need the 'out of hours emergency contact' number which is 020 8583 2222.

The service which looks after Park security is Parkguard Ltd. They have a Twitter account : @ParkguardLtd but don't seem to have a helpline so you still need to inform the Civic Centre.

The Gunnersbury Park main office is 020 8993 8809.

RENEWING YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Subscriptions were due on 1 April. Membership costs £10 a year and a form is enclosed with this Newsletter, if you have not signed up for a Standing Order. You can also pay by cheque and we welcome your contributions via Gift Aid. Donations are welcome, and we are happy to discuss proposed legacies. Do encourage others to join as larger numbers make us stronger. At gunnersburyfriends.org/friends/join-the-friends you can find the subscription form. You can contact the Friends Membership Secretary, 62 Creffield Road, London W3 9PS.