



A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL FRIENDS!

SUPPORTING THE NEW CLOTHING DISPLAYS

One of the new exhibition galleries will showcase the Museum's large and varied collection of dress and textiles which is of national importance. Several past curators specialised in textiles – in 1929 the first curator had a particular interest in Victorian costume, then Madeleine Ginsburg, assistant curator in the 1950s, passed on items with a Middlesex connection offered to the V&A but not wanted by them when she was working there and, most recently, Vanda Foster who previously worked at the Museum of London and retired in 2014. The collection include a 1675 embroidered baby's coif and a 1760 court dress as well as Peter rouch's football strip.

Both textile fibres and dye-stuffs are damaged by exposure to UV light, so these displays will change regularly. To make this practicable, adjustable dummies and supports which can be made to fit different garments are required. The Museum sought a specialist to work on creating these for the displays but the estimates submitted proved to be much higher than expected, totalling over £15,000, more than double the budget.

The Friends' committee considered a request for help from the museum staff and decided this was an important investment because re-usable mounts and dummies would have a long life. At the December committee meeting they agreed to make a grant of £8,500 to enable this work to proceed, offering essential support for the supports!



Court dress, about 1760

HELP FROM THE CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY'S COMMUNITY FUND

We are delighted to announce that the Friends' application for funding for an unusual Museum project will be supported by the Co-operative Society's Local Community Fund. A very long-standing Friend, Glen Barnham, spotted the grant scheme and encouraged us to apply. For it to succeed we need your help. The project is attached to the Co-op store in South Ealing Road W5 4QS, and runs until 27 October 2018. Every time Co-op members shop there, 1% of what they spend on selected own-brand products and services goes into the Local Community Fund, with a further contribution from money raised from sales of carrier bags when members choose this project as their favoured cause. Please sign up as a Co-op member and help support the project.

The funding will support the Gunnersbury Quilt Project. Later this year there will be an opportunity to learn the traditional techniques of quilting and help to make a modern quilt marking the re-creation of the Museum at Gunnersbury. The project has been inspired by a very fine pieced quilt made locally in about 1810, which has traditional geometric patterns and appliqué designs including scenes from the Bible and remarkably detailed plants. Too delicate for long-term display, this will be conserved to enable it to be shown for a short time each year. Both old and new quilts will appear together in a special exhibition in the autumn of 2018.

The sum of £3,000 was already budgetted towards the project and the Co-op funding will top this up to pay for materials, specialist conservation and creating a bespoke stand to support the old quilt. Alongside the exhibition there will be a series of events, including demonstrations, practical workshops for children and adults and quilting bees.

PROJECT FUNDERS

In mid November the Heritage of London Trust brought a group of trustees and advisers to see work in progress. The Trust had given £5,000 towards work on the arch with the 1920s commemorative plaques within it. They toured the Large Mansion and parts of the grounds and were very enthusiastic about what they saw.

Officials from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the regeneration project's main grant-giving body, also visited Gunnersbury and in December, in a relatively unusual step, made a supplementary grant of just under £700,000 to cover extra costs.

1950s OBJECTS & PHOTOS

For one of the new exhibition galleries, Museum staff are seeking 1940s or '50s photos from local people. These will be part of a changing display in the 1950s living room, telling part of the story of life in Ealing and Hounslow.

They also want to borrow objects from the same period to make the space feel more homely, particularly a mantel clock, small side table, photo frames, books and magazines and a magazine rack. Photos and objects only need to be lent for a limited time for changing displays. If you can help, email gunnersbury@ealing.gov.uk or phone 020 8993 8809. Please don't send any objects or photographs without getting in touch first – the Museum cannot take responsibility for such items.

SMALL MANSION AND STABLES

Following two failed attempts to market these buildings we understand that Ealing officers had been discussing with a developer conversion of both to residential units, with a modest element of community use of the Small Mansion.

It now appears that Historic England has offered to fund an expert study. This would provide accurate costings and evaluate more appropriate uses for such important Listed Buildings.

THE FRIENDS' AGM

The Chairman reviewed the year, summarising our funding pledges and our significant role in providing information. He emphasised the importance of being able to mobilise people's love and enthusiasm for Gunnersbury when things were difficult. Our Treasurer reported a healthy financial position, with modest running costs, funds protected to cover commitments and a grant from the J & R Howard Trust towards our investment in the souvenir book. Our reserves policy, as before, protects our investments but aims to spend interest on projects initiated by Museum and Park managers, especially where it can lever in grants. While existing committee members were re-elected, we also welcomed a new member, Carol Stiles.

David Bowler, the CIC's Chief Executive, spoke of his work since April. He had inherited a good team. He had spent time walking the Park and meeting people, including neighbours. Money was a constant difficulty with no clear business plan; delayed works led to the loss of anticipated income so there was little funding for posts he needed to fill. He was recruiting new board directors, discussing leases and negotiating the CIC's long-term agreement with the local authorities.

Ealing Council had previously offered an interest-free loan to fund operations but now required 10% interest so he was seeking alternatives. He aimed to improve communications; a lack of information had contributed to public hostility over the events licence application. Pressure to open the Museum by Easter was huge but his team would complete as much as practicable for a preview period, with an official opening later in the year.

UPDATE on the REGENERATION PROJECT

Large areas of the refurbished Park were opened up during the autumn. The Large Mansion remains fenced off while building work is completed; Museum staff will only be able to begin installing exhibits in late February. The May local elections will require a few weeks of *purdah*, when announcements which might influence political support are prohibited. As a result there is pressure to open in late March, though it is hard to imagine how 3 floors of galleries can be completed so fast.

Capel Manor students have cleared earth circles round the young fruit trees they planted in the orchard and the community garden is being readied for spring planting. At the north-east corner of the Park the gothic features, restored when the Friends' £6,617 donation released Historic England's grant of £73,512, have been opened up and look very handsome. In the re-created half of the Horseshoe Pond water-lilies from the nursery which supplied the Rothschilds have been planted.

Specialist contractors will return the carriages in January for the display in their new space beside the café. We believe the new operators, Benugo, will open the café early in 2018 now they have planning permission for extra ventilation systems.

THE THREAT TO PUBLIC PARKS

From time to time this *Newsletter* has carried reports of growing concern about the future of public parks. For 20 years the Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery have run the *Parks for People* grant programme, from which Gunnersbury received over £4m. Such grants support capital investment, but not running costs. At Christmas *The Guardian* newspaper published this letter from a group of parks experts:

"The quietly announced news that the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is closing its *Parks for People* funding programme comes as a shock. It should be a matter of huge concern, not only to the 90% of families with children who visit their local park at least once a month, but to all who care about the well-being of our towns and cities. Since it was set up in 1996, the programme has transformed hundreds of urban parks from no-go areas to thriving community assets, paying not just for repairs to bandstands, lakes, paths, gates and other features but also for new cafés, toilets, play areas and funding for new staff.

Austerity has hit parks departments particularly hard. As a non-statutory service, parks have been in the frontline of the cuts since 2010, with budgets falling on average by 40% – and in some cases by far more. Newcastle upon Tyne has seen a 90% fall, resulting in unprecedented plans to transfer the city's parks to a charitable trust. Elsewhere, councils such as Knowsley are selling parks for development to fund future maintenance. Users have seen the impact of loss of staff, reduced tidiness and increased anti-social behaviour. Politicians, of course, have not.

Now the one dedicated source of funding for public parks has been cut off without warning. The HLF will continue to support parks but in competition with other, elite, forms of heritage – and that will mean less money available. Money aside, the signal this decision gives that parks are marginal, or do not matter, could not be worse timed or further from the truth. Research by the HLF has revealed that by 2020 parks will be in a worse state than they were in the mid-1990s when HLF began its funding. Good-quality parks are needed more than ever to combat the stress of surviving in austerity Britain, and the loss of Parks for People is another lurch into a spiral of decline which this time could prove terminal for many places."

from: David Lambert, Dr Stewart Harding, The Parks Agency; Ian Baggott, Communities First Partnership; Dr Anna Barker, University of Leeds; Matthew Bradbury, The Parks Alliance; Prof Robert Lee, The North West Parks Friends Forum; Dominic Liptrot, Lost Art; Anna Minton, author; Peter Neal, consultant; Paul Rabbitts, head of parks, Watford Borough Council; Dr Sid Sullivan and Prof Ken Worpole.

Despite high quality refurbishment putting our Museum and Park into good heart for the future, severely reduced government funding threatens local authorities' ability to sustain them. Museums and parks are not statutory services and so compete with education and social services which are. Gunnersbury will be vulnerable to slow decline if its new management cannot earn enough income from leases, events and activities.

GUNNERSBURY SPORT

Work on the new tennis courts near the car park are complete, but these will not be available to use for a while. Fund-raising for the sports facilities has continued and much of the total cost of £14.15 million is now in place.

Reports to the Hounslow and Ealing Cabinets indicate that the University of West London is contributing £2 million and Brentford FC's charitable trust will provide £500,000 as well as renting offices in the hub building.

During the design stages PowerOn, the firm responsible for the power infrastructure for the Brentford Stadium development in Lionel Road South, sought access across Gunnersbury Park to link the stadium site with the main local sub-station. They have been granted a 99-year easement at the cost of only £1 in return for their contribution in kind of the essential power works for the new Sports Hub

Following a tender process with a short-list of 5, the £11,083m contract for building the new Sports Hub and renewing pitches has been awarded to Kier Construction. Work is expected to start by the spring and the facilities should be operating in early 2019.

NEW APPOINTMENTS

We welcome two new staff members:

Kathryn Rooke, the part-time Temporary Archivist, will set up the study room in the Large Mansion. She also works part-time at London University's SOAS Archives.

Angharad Howell, the full-time Volunteer Co-ordinator, previously worked at the Handel & Hendrix Museum. She has begun recruiting and training a team of paid and volunteer front-of-house staff.

Six part-time Visitor Assistant posts have been advertised, closing date 28 January. They will help visitors enjoy Gunnersbury Park and Museum, support learning, security, first aid and the shop. Full details on the web-site: visitgunnersbury.org/about/work-for-us

WHAT'S ON . . .

CAPEL MANOR COLLEGE

Visit the Gunnersbury Centre's web-site to find out about its work here:
capel.ac.uk/gunnersbury-park-centre.html.

- The next Advice Evening takes place on Monday, 29 January, 5 –7:30 pm, and
- The next Open Day and plant sale, with a chance to see inside the walled garden is on Saturday, 21 April 10 am–3 pm.

GUNNERSBURY PARK: THE PLACE AND THE PEOPLE

On Monday 19 March at 7.30 pm, James Wisdom and Val Bott will give a talk to the Brentford & Chiswick Local History Society. They will use historic images, some newly discovered, and their recent research for the forthcoming Scala Publications book. This is due out when the Museum re-opens this spring. Friends are welcome to attend at the Chiswick Memorial Club, Bourne Place, London W4 2EL, no need to book.

GUNNERSBURY HOUSE, MIDDLESEX.
By Mr. BOWES,
On Tuesday, May 20, and following Days, at 10 o'clock,
ALL the truly valuable BUILDING MATERIALS of that noble and modern Edifice, formerly the residence of her late Royal Highness the Princess AMELIA, contiguously situated near the Metropolis, and within one mile of Kew Bridge; comprising about 100 square of excellent found Westmoreland slates and plain tiling, about 50 capital of modern-sized Jamaica mahogany doors and staircases, about 200 square of real good wainscot floors, a great number of very fine marble chimney pieces, with slabs of large dimensions, several Portland ditto, upwards of 4000 feet of ditto pavement, fishes with large plate and best crown glass, rich paper hangings on canvas, exceeding good raised flush panelled wainscoting and pressies, several hundred rods of very good found brick work, &c.—To be viewed any time previous to the sale, Sundays excepted. Catalogues to be had on the Premises; at Mr. Beown's, Glass-grinder, Great Queen Street, Lincoln's Inn-fields; at the Plough and Harrow, Hammerfinch; at the Wheat Sheaf, Tooting; at the Talbot Inn, Richmond; and of the Auctioneer, Kingston, Surrey.—The whole or any part of that beautiful spot of Land, containing upwards of 80 acres within one wall, most admirably situated for building, and the Materials for that purpose may be had on the spot, to be disposed of by Private Contract, at a very reasonable rate. For particulars apply on the Premises for Mr. Williams and Brooks, Solicitors, Lincoln's Inn.

This cutting from *The Times* 12 May 1800 lists building materials sold off after the demolition of the 17th century Gunnersbury House. Greenish Westmoreland slate from the roof is mentioned. Fragments of this, with traces of lime mortar, have recently been found in disturbed earth near the Terrace. They are now in the Museum collection.

The Friends of Gunnersbury Park & Museum, registered charity 286310
www.gunnersburyfriends.org

GUNNERSBURY SWANS

Go to see the new cygnet on the Round Pond who arrived in November; after a vote on the Gunnersbury Twitter feed it has been named Noel (or Noelle).

Amongst surviving records of Gunnersbury is a list of debts assembled when probate was being resolved after the death of Henry Furnese MP, the owner from 1739 to 1756, and his sister and executor, who died in 1758. One sum was for barley bought from a local farmer as feed for Mr Furnese's pet swan.

LEARNING & ACTIVITIES

Introduction to Drawing, Workshop for Children

On Saturday, 20 January 2018 a 2-hour workshop for 7-13 year olds will explore nature in the landscape. It will encourage and inspire the imagination and help build and expand a child's drawing practice.

Book *either* a morning *or* afternoon workshop with Tahira Mandarino, a Jerwood Drawing Prize 2017 nominated artist, at either 10:30 am or 1pm. In the Small Mansion, cost £12. Booking is essential online here:
<https://tinyurl.com/yaq5wd7a>

"Travelling with Thomas"

On Monday 22 January 2018 at The Small Mansion, 1 to 3 pm, see *Travelling with Thomas*, a musical journey in the making, exploring the folk tale of Thomas the Rhymer.

Share the journey with Laurel Swift (composer) and Lizzie Watts (designer) as they create a new folk musical of Thomas in a year-long collaborative project. This interactive gig presents fine performers, beautiful new songs, music and art. Free admission, but booking essential at <https://tinyurl.com/y79jcfcr>

Contact gunnersburylearning@ealing.gov.uk for further information about these events and sign up to visitgunnersbury.org for updates and news.

FRIENDS MEMBERSHIP

Our subscription year runs from 1 April: a reminder slip will come with the next Newsletter.

Membership costs £10 a year, payable by Standing Order or by cheque. Subscriptions and donations via Gift Aid are welcome and we are pleased to discuss possible legacies.

Please encourage others to join: greater numbers make us stronger. Contact the Membership Secretary at 62 Creffield Road, W3 9PS using the online membership form at gunnersburyfriends.org/friends/join-the-friends.

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Please send contributions for the *Newsletter* to the Editor, 25 Hartington Road W4 3TL, info@gunnersburyfriends.org