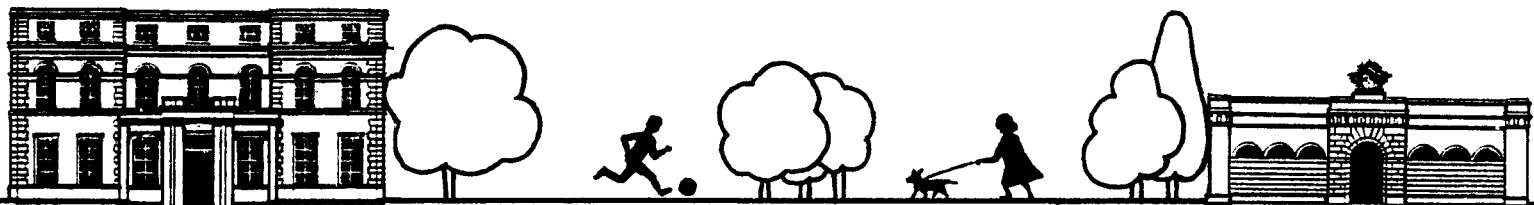


FRIENDS of GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

No. 11
August 1984

NEWSLETTER



SUMMER FETE 1st September

This year we will be holding our Annual Fete in the park on Saturday 1st September. This is our major fund-raising event of the year (last year we made over £1000) and we really do need volunteers on the day. Can you help? We will provide you with the stalls and the goods if you can give up your afternoon, or perhaps assist at the end, taking a car-load of stuff back to one of the organisers' garages. It is enjoyable hard work, so please phone me, James Wisdom (994 4231) if you would like a job to do.

Do you have anything you could contribute for the stalls? We will need bric-a-brac, books, tins of food and bottles of drink, toys, prizes for the tombola, jewellery, jams and jellies and other fete-y things. Or perhaps you could bake us a cake? Your favourite recipe or this simple one, which will freeze well.

6oz self-raising flour (sifted)
6oz caster sugar
6oz soft margarine

3 eggs
1½ teaspoons baking powder
vanilla essence

1. Warm oven to Gas Mark 3/Electric 325°F (160°C), 2. Grease and paper two 7 inch sandwich tins or an 8 inch ring tin, 3. Place all the ingredients in a bowl and blend together by hand, with a mixer or a food processor, 4. Put mixture into tin or tins, baking for approx 25-30 mins for sandwich tins or 35-40 mins for ring tin. Vary the flavour of the cake by omitting the vanilla essence and adding one of the following: 2 tablespoons cocoa, grated rind of one lemon or one orange, 2oz coconut, 1 teaspoon mixed spice or use your imagination!

Eva Swann (993 2629), Joan Catterall (560 4262) and Marion Booth (992 9891) are co-ordinating this great event - give them a ring to let them know how you can help.

Finally, come along on the day (from 2.00pm onwards) spend some money, renew your membership and have a good time - there will be a fancy dress competition for the children, Punch and Judy, pony rides and cart rides, a tombola, the nurseries will be open, there will be shadow puppets in the Temple, etc., etc., etc!

The Park

At the height of summer it seems incongruous to be thinking of the bedding schemes for the summer of 1985 but the plans for next year in Gunnersbury Park are almost completed and the seeds will be ordered in mid-September; now is the time to look at our bedding and see what lessons are to be learned.

One of our biggest successes this summer must, I think, be the reintroduction of the Tropical Border which seems to have stimulated a lot of interest amongst the public. Although we called it the Tropical Border we did use a little licence and some of the subjects were not really tropical. Perhaps next year we should be more purist and only include those subjects which originate in tropical and sub-tropical areas, after the fashion of Victorian gardens.

The labelling, too, has been much studied by the visitors to the park and hopefully next year we can include an English name as well as the Latin nomenclature. Possibly the most recurrent comment on our border was "Yes, I like it but why the swing frames?" and this is a valid criticism. Our idea was to train

nasturtium up the framework and along the horizontal bar and allow it to fall naturally from a height of 7 feet, making a curtain of bright orange flowers against the deep purple backdrop of the copper beech. Unfortunately, I miscalculated when the seeds should have been sown and the plants were far too small when we planted them out and had not made the growth we would have liked. I still believe the frame can work and perhaps next year it will be covered with ornamental gourds.

Whatever you think of our bedding this year we hope it gave you food for thought and, I hope, some ideas for your gardens next year. As long as the public does not just walk past without noticing it we may have made a start in our fight against vandalism. It is far too early to be certain, but our plant losses from the bedding schemes are minimal and with two exceptions all the 150 or so labels have remained in situ.

Mike Rowan

...and a visit to the Nurseries

Mike Rowan is in charge of the Nurseries at Gunnersbury and is at the moment preparing the 15,000 seedlings which will be put out in October in Osterley, Chiswick and the other parks and gardens in the eastern "half" of the London Borough of Hounslow.

He has very kindly agreed to give the Friends a guided tour of the Nurseries and a talk about the work done there and he will also try to advise on any plant problems. If you would like to join this party meet on Sunday 14th October at the Bowling Green entrance to the Nursery at 3.00pm. All are welcome.

£30,000 Grant Lost

The following is a short, factual account of how six Councillors from Ealing and six from Hounslow, with the assistance of their officers, "lost" a grant of £30,000.

- It has been policy for years that the Museum's transport collection should be housed in the Stables.
- The Museums and Galleries Commission grants money for the housing of museums.
- In December the Gunnersbury Park Joint Committee applied for £30,000 from the Commission to move the collection to the Stables.
- The GPJC was promised sufficient funds (another £30,000) by the Riding School to "match" the grant if the application was successful, in return for the chance to expand slightly and gain security of tenure.
- The application was successful.
- Then it was discovered that restoring the derelict buildings was a capital improvement and that Hounslow had not included this amongst its other capital expenditure.
- Government controls prevented Hounslow from spending more on its capital improvements.
- Ealing would not assist from its capital allocation.
- Then the architects said that it may cost up to £30,000 more to do the work and neither council wanted to risk that.
- Nor had the GPJC negotiated with the Riding School, although the application had gone in in December.
- So the GPJC met and asked its Treasurer what to do. He said - in Treasurer's language - that it couldn't be done. Some of the Friends were in the room and listening hard.
- Then the GPJC adjourned its meeting to make a decision a week later.
- A few days afterwards the Chairman cancelled the meeting, acknowledging that the situation was hopeless.

By such fumbling and bungling the GPJC lost £60,000 to improve the Museum, repair the Stables and establish the Riding School. Is anyone to blame? Nominally, the Chairman of the Gunnersbury Park Joint Committee, so at our AGM we called for his resignation - to no effect.

What of the future? The GPJC has applied for the grant again and they have a whole year to get it right. Will they do so? Watch this space. . . .

Vandalism

Gunnersbury's vandals are no worse than in other parks but last year they did at least £10,000-worth of damage. Reglazing, especially in the Nurseries, cost £3,800; repairing fences and gates (especially at the Lionel Road entrance) cost £1,800; carpentry and lock repairs cost £2,000; repairing roofs and gutters (for example, on the Golf Hut) cost £950 and rebuilding boundary walls (for example, in the rest garden) cost £650.

What can be done?

The best answer is the most expensive. Repair immediately the damage is done, keep the whole park up to standard, employ sufficient staff, catch and prosecute the offenders. It is a similar problem to litter - dropping the second piece is easy! But, of course, this won't happen. In fact L.B. Ealing has so far failed to find their half of the cash needed to put things right and employing sufficient staff is a pipe-dream.

The GPJC asked us, the Friends, if we had any suggestions. We included this in our last Newsletter, and we would still welcome any ideas from our members. The best short-term approach we could come up with was to assist the park staff by equipping them with walkie-talkies. These cost £300 a time (and they need at least two!) so rather than drain our funds, we have found a firm which will hire them out for £30 per week and we intend to conduct a short experiment to see if these devices will genuinely assist park staff. The next steps could be dogs, guns, man-traps, infra-red beams and land-mines! Was it like this in the good old days?

Book Review

"VILLAGE LONDON" by Edward Walford, M.A.,
Published in two volumes by The Alderman Press at £17.50 each

London has often been described as "a collection of villages" but today this requires some imagination, particularly here in former West Middlesex. "Village London", reprinted by The Alderman Press, is therefore a fascinating view of what used to be.

First published in 1883 as "Greater London", the originals are hard to find and fetch high prices, many having been broken up for their illustrations, so this re-issue is especially welcome. Volume I covers the area north of the Thames in 576 pages with profuse engravings. Acton, Ealing, Chiswick and Brentford are well detailed, as is Gunnersbury, where a print of the original house is reproduced. Volume II describes London south of the Thames, including the nearby towns of Richmond, Ham, Petersham and Kingston.

"Village London" is a most worthwhile acquisition either for the collector or for anyone interested in local history and the publishers are to be commended for making it available again.

The Small Mansion

Roger Nicholson.

What is to be the future of the Small Mansion? There are four ideas floating around:

- (1) An art gallery (which would need public funds)
- (2) A base for West London's archaeologists (also needing public funds)
- (3) A "sports injuries clinic" - a private clinic for physiotherapy, paying a rent to the Joint Committee
- (4) A suite of rooms for hiring out for conferences, wedding receptions, dinners and banquets, exhibitions and so on. This, too, would pay rent to the GPJC

As neither Ealing nor Hounslow is going to repair the other park buildings they need to generate an income. The fourth idea would generate the most and is the most acceptable in political/leisure/recreational terms.

Why doesn't the Joint Committee get on with it and start to repair the Orangery, Bath House, Potomac Tower, etc.?

The next GPJC meeting is on 21st September at 6.00pm. It is in the Small Mansion and open to the public; it lasts about three-quarters of an hour. Come along and see what happens.

The Riding School

The Gunnersbury Park Riding School has applied for planning permission to erect a temporary structure to provide an indoor riding school. This would be situated within the area they already occupy. The building would be 45 metres long, 22 metres wide and 8.75 metres high; it is made from white pvc-coated polyester and would look like a marquee. From within the Park it would be obscured by trees, though residents of Gunnersbury Avenue would see the top of it above the wall through the trees by the road. The building has already been used in the Brecon Beacons National Park. The Friends' Committee has written to the Council saying that we have no objections to this application.

A Happy Event! On Wednesday 6th June a chestnut filly foal was born to * the pony Pepsi at Gunnersbury Riding School. She is called Cola. Anyone is welcome to visit the Stables to see her.

Fishing

While day-time fishing on the Potomac Lake is encouraged it has been the case that fishermen have travelled many miles to fish there at night - paying no fees, discarding tackle which can injure ducks and geese and possibly damaging the fencing around the Lionel Road entrance. A "fishing party" of courageous park staff netted 28 fisherman in one night recently and charges are being brought.

The Museum

On 28th July the Curator, Ann Balfour Paul, was married to James Collett-White. We sent best wishes and a small gift on behalf of all the Friends and Ann has asked us to pass on her thanks.

WEST LONDON CRAFTSMEN: 5th Exhibition
14th September - 21st October
Craft demonstrations in the Temple
every Sunday, 3.00-4.30pm

TRADITIONAL BUILDING MATERIALS
29th September - 28th October

INDIA THROUGH THE AGES
26th October - 25th November

THE VICTORIAN SOLDIER
1st December - 2nd January
with an additional display of model
soldiers

Friends' Activities

"KENTWELL 1610" A talk with slides by M. Schofield-Palmer in the Museum at 7.30pm on Friday 12th October. Everybody welcome - refreshments afterwards.

Each year the proprietor of Kentwell Hall, Suffolk, summons volunteers to assist in an "historical re-creation" of the house and estate. This year 195 goose girls, hay makers, laundresses, bakers, schoolmasters, peasants, gentry, etc. dressed, spoke and lived in the year 1610 for 3 weeks to the amazement of visiting school children. One member of the Friends' Committee, Margaret Schofield-Palmer, made her own Jacobean dress and went as "gentry". She has kindly agreed to give the Friends a talk on this fascinating exercise in re-creating "living history". Please come along.

CHRISTMAS BAZAAR - We will be holding our Christmas Bazaar in the Temple between 2 and 4pm on Sunday 25th November. Please come along and stock up with your Christmas requirements!

KITCHENS - Your last chance to visit the Kitchens this year will be on 29th and 30th September from 2pm onwards.

The British Association of Friends of Museums' Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday 20th October at the National Maritime Museum. On that day there will be tours of the museum, coaches from Victoria and boat trips back, teas and lunches. If you would like to join those of us going, please phone James Wisdom (994 4231) for details - soon.

SOFT TOYS: Hand-made soft toys have a very special quality that factory-made toys can't equal - will you make a toy for us to sell. The simplest are often the most attractive. If you would like to but need materials, phone Anne Stead, 574 8341. We also need old stockings and tights for the stuffing.