

FRIENDS OF GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

NEWSLETTER NO 109 MAY 2018



MUSEUM RE-OPENING, WEEKEND OF 23/24 JUNE 2018

Despite many delays, mainly because of the complexity of the restoration of a building of this age, the showcases and graphics have been installed and the Museum team are now installing objects from the collections. It was even possible to dress the Victorian kitchens lightly, with some objects for food preparation and cooking, in time for a school group to use them at the beginning of May. We understand that the summer will see what is being described as a 'soft' opening from 23 June, allowing a few months for snagging and discovering how the place works, before a big official opening of the whole restoration project in the autumn. Admission is free.

RE-DISCOVERING THE PARK

Since our last Newsletter most elements of the landscape restoration at Gunnersbury have been opened up and visitors are now able to explore areas which have been fenced off for a couple of years. New planting is underway in the community garden and the wildflower meadow is flowering.

The gothic screen near the Small Mansion and the narrow rose garden beside the North Circular look immaculate now; Friends' funding helped to unlock a large sum from Historic England for restoration work in this area. The Large Mansion was already unwrapped when, in the first week of May, the barriers around the terrace on the garden front were taken down and the scale and fine quality of the work on the building can now be seen close up. It also has a new setting of fine resin bound gravel.

Benugo opened the new Café shortly before Easter. With its own pizza oven, home-made lemonade and a range of special offers on the lunch menu, such as two for one pizzas, it has been drawing in the customers seven days a week. Though the weather has been patchy it has been busy and seems very popular. Our reviewers recommend the substantial breakfast, available from 8am! Find the Café website here: <https://tinyurl.com/ydd4txhn>.

OAK SAPLINGS FOR GUNNERSBURY

Stewart Muir, who has been a Friend for some years, has purchased 3 beautiful English oak saplings from Tendercare in New Dedham. Rather topically, this is the firm which supplied trees and plants for several royal weddings including that of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle. Chris Ellis, Head Gardener, arranged for them to be planted near the old Rothschild Tennis Court. Stewart writes. "I would like to call these trees 'the Friends of Gunnersbury' as I am certain that this transformation would not have happened without the Friends spending decades encouraging and supporting the aim of restoration". They will mark what he calls the 'flowering' of the Park. We are very thrilled by his gesture and hope to celebrate this generous gift in the future.

WORK STARTS ON NEW SPORTS FACILITIES

Work began in early May on the sports hub building whose site between the car park and the playground is enclosed within white painted hoardings. This work involves not only the new building but also substantial changes to the type and layout of pitches so a large section of the field is fenced off and the contractors' main access is the gate at the Popes Lane/Lionel Road Junction. The project manager has sent apologies and asked for users' patience while work proceeds, with completion due in the summer of 2019. During this time fewer parking spaces will be available. So just as we can begin to enjoy the restored eastern section of the Park, the western part becomes a no-access building plot.

WATER FEATURES

A fountain is now operating in the Horseshoe Pond near The Orangery, replicating the one which was there in Victorian times. Jan Anderson, the landscape architect who oversaw the restoration, has traced the Latour-Marliac nursery in France which supplied Leopold Rothschild with waterlilies for the Horseshoe Pond.

It is amazing that a nursery which supplied not only Gunnersbury but also Monet's garden still flourishes today. You can find out more at <http://latour-marliac.com/en/>.

Jan reports: "We haven't yet tracked down an accurate list

of exactly which of the Latour-Marliac waterlilies were used by James Hudson, head gardener of what we call The Small Mansion. But after identifying varieties that were popular at that time, and studying contemporary garden magazines that ran features on Gunnersbury, we've made an educated guess. The Rothschild archive holds a folder of unsorted receipts, including many for garden purchases, and one day I'd love to go back and sort through those to see if we can find some more evidence! Likewise the nursery may have some archive material that will help us identify what was ordered – now that would be a lovely research trip!"

She adds, "We planted the following waterlilies in the Horseshoe Pond in the spring of 2017 – they are all quite early Marliac varieties: *Nymphaea Colonel Welch*, *Nymphaea James Brydon*, *Nymphaea Madame Wilfron Gonnere*, *Nymphaea Marliacea Chromatella* and *Nymphaea Marliacea Albida*. Monsieur Latour-Marliac even named a variety after his friend, James Hudson and a few of the *Nymphaea James Hudson* variety will arrive shortly."

Sadly, the dredging of the Round Pond has upset its ecology and the recent warm, wet weather has caused a bloom of weed.

NEW STAFF

Gradually the new team which will run Gunnersbury is being assembled. Amongst those taking up their posts recently are an assistant gardener, a finance manager and a marketing assistant. We offer them all a warm welcome.

As we have done before, we have invited two of the recent arrivals to tell us a little about themselves.

Angharad Howell (known as Hari) writes: "After developing a love of museums at a young age I studied Archaeology at Cardiff University, with a focus on Medieval Britain and Egyptology.

In the last year of my degree I worked as part of the Front of House team at Cardiff's local history museum, *The Cardiff Story*. While there, I completed an NVQ in Cultural and Heritage Venue Management and co-ordinated the Welsh arm of the Science

Museum's collection of telegrams and related oral histories which are now in their new Communications Gallery.

After completing these projects, I graduated from a distance learning course at Leicester University with an MA in Museum Studies. I then moved to London to take up a new position as Volunteer Co-ordinator at Handel & Hendrix. In this fantastic role I really enjoyed getting to know and helping to grow their wonderful team of dedicated volunteers, especially in such an eclectic historic home!

As the new Volunteer & Visitor Experience Officer at Gunnersbury I am looking forward to learning more about the history of Ealing and Hounslow and developing a wonderful experience for visitors and volunteers alike. Please contact me at HowellAn@ealing.gov.uk if you'd like to get involved!"

Amy Dobson writes, "I'm joining Gunnersbury Park Museum as the new Assistant Curator. In this post I'll be working 3 days a week, but I will also be one of the new Visitor Assistants, so my time at Gunnersbury will be split between two very different roles. Before this I worked at The Royal Air Force Museum in Hendon and for the National Trust for Scotland at The Tenement House in Glasgow.

My interests in local and social history began as a child when I had my sixth birthday party in a museum! I later went on to study Economic and Social History at the University of Glasgow.

I started volunteering at GPM in January 2017 and fell in love with the collection and the history of Ealing and Hounslow, going on to work freelance on some curatorial projects and assisting the Curator in the final stages of the museum's refurbishment. I am incredibly excited to continue sharing the stories of the local area and its people and getting to know our visitors in the new galleries."

THE CURVE: PUBLIC INQUIRY, June 2018

Hounslow Council refused the application for these two enormous tower blocks, one 32 storeys high, at Chiswick Roundabout in 2017. The developer has appealed against this decision so a public inquiry begins at Brentford Free Church on 12 June. Hounslow Council, Historic England, Kew Gardens and the Friends' Chairman, James Wisdom, will be amongst those giving evidence there.

On its web-site Historic England has summarised its reasons for objecting. They say that this development is not only entirely at odds with the character of the surrounding locality but would be an unwelcome and inappropriate intrusion into some of West London's most cherished historic spaces and places.

The two very tall towers would be dramatically out of scale with the area. They would have a serious impact upon the Kew World Heritage Site (including the Royal Botanic Gardens and 44 listed buildings) and 3 Conservation Areas: the Kew Green Conservation Area with its quintessentially English village green, the Strand on the Green Conservation Area's tranquil river setting and the Gunnersbury Park Conservation Area's commemorative and historic spaces – the Cemetery and the Grade II* registered Park – all of which would be over-shadowed by the looming buildings.

Historic England also objected to the proposals because the harm they would cause is unnecessary to regenerate the area. "New development should enhance, not damage this area's unique character."

Very substantial amounts of evidence have been prepared, both to support the rejection of the proposals and by the developer. The latter is trying to make the case that the high quality of the design is so great that it would enhance the area and the views despite the size! A great deal hinges upon the photos submitted to demonstrate this, as their accuracy is now being questioned.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Before Easter Ealing Council agreed to two major events whose income would be ring-fenced to support Gunnersbury. At public briefings the key issues were anxiety about moving large numbers of people into the refurbished park and noise. Both of the organisers are experienced, and described their plans for careful supervision of crowds to and from Acton Town Station. Sound would be directed towards the A4/M4, away from housing.

At the meeting on The Secret Cinema some people knew its film-themed interactive events and were enthusiastic. A licence has been issued for setting up from 19 July, running shows from 2 Aug to 2 Sept, Wed to Sun, with a nightly audience of 4,500 and day-time community events, and clearing by 7 Sept. See secretcinema.org

The Lovebox and Citadel Festivals over the weekend of 13, 14, 15 July promised such community benefits as employment, trading on site and opportunities for young people to learn new skills, plus a

ballot for discounted tickets. Lovebox was held for some years in Victoria Park in East London but a new operator won the 2018 contract. The promoters claim they'll run a well-managed event as they'd like to be welcomed back in future. See loveboxfestival.com

Diversity, the *Britain's Got Talent* winning dancers, are applying for a licence to run circus-themed shows in a 2,000 seat big top in the Park, 26-28 October. More to follow.

SMALL MANSION, STABLES

The future of these buildings remains undecided; 3 attempts have failed to find a developer to take them on. Historic England (HE) has asked the Project Board to find more appropriate uses for these significant buildings than conversion into flats and has now funded an expert study of the refurbishment work needed, with costings. They favour finding short-term 'meanwhile' uses for the Small Mansion once the Museum moves out, until a sustainable future is agreed. To support this the Gunnersbury Development Trust has taken advice from the Architectural Heritage Fund. We remain concerned that selling off part of the Park means a virtually permanent loss of the public asset and, that having people living in the Park who are not

part of its operations puts its security at risk. Cultural or community uses could bring a lively partner benefitting us all, while experience elsewhere shows that new owners of expensive flats tend to try to control and limit what happens on their doorstep. Finding the right solution is hugely important even if it takes more time.

POTOMAC LAKE

Gunnersbury staff have asked that we immediately call the police, and the RSPCA on 0300 123 4999, if we spot waterfowl poaching at the Potomac.

They are also working with the Environment Agency on illegal fishing there. Please email gunnersbury@ealing.gov.uk if you see this taking place.

GUNNERSBURY & EXBURY

Lionel Nathan de Rothschild bought Exbury in Hampshire in 1919. He had the resources to fulfill his vision of an exceptional woodland garden. Lionel cared for his mother's collection of rare orchids at Gunnersbury and was a keen collector of plants, especially rhododendrons and azaleas, many of which he hybridized. His grandsons, Nicholas and Lionel, now manage Exbury which is ablaze with astonishing colours in May and June. Could Gunnersbury have looked like this if he had stayed? If you visit, seek out the Burmese Bell in the trees near the house. This once hung at Gunnersbury, near the rose basket beds, and was used to call guests in for tea!

CAPEL MANOR

The next Open Day in the college's Walled Garden site is on 16 June 10am to 3.00pm.

If you are interested in their courses, go to the next Advice Evening on Tuesday 26 June between 5.00pm and 7.30pm.

GUNNERSBURY PARK: The Place & the People

The history of the Gunnersbury estate, a joint project between the Friends and Scala Publishing, arrived from the printers in March. They have produced a beautifully illustrated layout, printed on high quality paper; over 60 illustrations range from the middle ages to the 21st century. It has been selling well in the Café and on the web, price £6.95, and will be available in the new Museum shop and at Capel Manor College open days. It will make a lovely present!

PARKRUN

There will be no Saturday Parkrun at Gunnersbury in July as works on new sports facilities and installations for the summer events make it impossible to provide a safe 5km route. The organisers suggest regulars join Parkrun sessions at nearby Crane Park or Osterley Park.

'GUNNERSBURY PAST & PRESENT' 3 July 2018

The Ealing Civic Society's *John Delafons Lecture* will be given this year by Val Bott. The speaker has been involved with the Friends since the organisation began in the 1980s and edits this *Newsletter*. Having studied Gunnersbury's history over many years she is co-author with James Wisdom of the new history of Gunnersbury which will be on sale that evening.

The event starts at 7.30pm on Tuesday 3 July 2018 at Ealing Green Church, W5 5OT. All are welcome to attend this free talk. www.ealingcivicsociety.org

EDITOR'S NOTE

Huge apologies for the late arrival of this spring Newsletter. I did not manage to complete the layout in advance of two weeks' jury service. Afterwards so much had been changing from day to day that the whole thing has been re-written! But the delay means that I have up to date info on the reopening of the Museum. See you there! VB

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Our membership year began on 1 April; many thanks to those who have sent your payments already. The majority of Friends now pay by Standing Order. If you do not yet do so, the renewal form enclosed with this Newsletter offers the option of setting one up or paying by cheque.

Subscriptions and donations via Gift Aid are welcome and we are pleased to discuss possible legacies to support Gunnersbury in the future. Please encourage others to join – greater numbers make us stronger. Membership costs £10 a year. You can find the application form here: gunnersburyfriends.org/friends/join-the-friends. Contact the Membership Secretary at 62 Creffield Road, London W3 9PS.

FOR YOUR DIARY: The Annual General Meeting will take place on 29 September 2018, venue to be announced

gunnersburyfriends.org; [@gunnersbury1](https://twitter.com/gunnersbury1); visitgunnersbury.org; gunnersburytrust.wordpress.com

The Friends of Gunnersbury Park and Museum is a Registered Charity number 286310