

FRIENDS OF GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

NEWSLETTER

NO 113

SEPTEMBER 2019



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, Saturday 28 September, 10.00am

Our Annual General Meeting will take place inside Capel Manor College; the entrance gate is accessible from the main Car Park. All paid up members are entitled to attend to review the past year's activities, to receive the financial report and to discuss key issues about the future of the Park and Museum.

PARK UPDATE



We are delighted to report that, for the first time, the Park has been given the Green Flag Award, a scheme which recognises well managed UK parks. As you can see, so was Chris Ellis (left), the Head Gardener! It is very well deserved, for such things as the wonderful wild-flower meadow, the lilies in the Italian Garden (right) and the other work described below.



The Rose Basket Beds

Supervised by Chris Ellis and his team a party of volunteers from GSK, whose head office is nearby, planted out the rose basket beds on 5 September to designs by Capel Manor students. They look very good. Rose bushes will be added later as bare-root stock and the arched metal 'basket handles' will follow. The Friends' contribution towards garden work has supplemented funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for this project.



A pencil sketch made in 1818 by the daughter of Alexander Copland, who built the Large Mansion, is the oldest record of basket beds at Gunnersbury, while a watercolour from the late 1830s depicts one of the first basket beds in Hannah Rothschild's gardens close to site of today's beds. The watercolour appears inside the back cover of our Scala Book on Gunnersbury Park.

Protecting an ancient beech tree

Close to the café stands a very old beech tree – there was a second one alongside, but after heavy rain in 1988 it fell, landing on the old café which the Friends were running at the time! You may have seen that a circle of turf is gradually being removed from around the base of the surviving tree. The exposed earth will be mulched with a special conditioner to help reduce compaction and encourage beneficial mycorrhizae essential for the tree's longevity. Staff from Wild Frontiers, a specialist travel company based in Power Road, are pictured working on the project. They were also involved in preparing the rose basket beds for planting in early August.





Horseshoe Pond

Repairs to damage caused to the northern bank of the Pond, by dogs running in and out of the water, have been completed. The damaged gentle slope, composed of gravel laid over membrane, has now been re-modelled with mini gabions (wire baskets of stones) creating an edge instead of the slope. Here and at the Round Pond are large A-boards with notices asking that dogs be kept out of the ponds.

The Round Pond

After a busy summer and positive feedback from enthusiastic users, Darren Farebrother, the operator, tells us he will still offer boat hire at weekends and during half term week until the end of October. His 3-year licence means he will be back next year. The big events in the Park have clearly had an impact on his business; the whole Pond was fenced off for Gunnersville during our seasonal walk on 8 September. On that day we spotted water-fowl including two Swans, half a dozen Egyptian Geese, some Mallard Ducks, a brief visit from three Canada Geese, a lot of Gulls and a pair of tiny dabchicks or Little Grebes.

The Potomac Lake

The Barnes & Mortlake Angling & Preservation Society has been licensed to manage the Potomac, for wildlife and for angling. They have been making preparations to re-start fishing since July. They also operate Shadwells Pool, near the Wetlands Centre in Barnes, and the Thames Young Mariners' Lagoon in Ham. Details of how to join to be able to fish there will appear on visitgunnersbury.org.

The lake was formerly a very deep pit from which high quality red clay was dug. It was used for the production of roof tiles, chimney pots, garden ornaments and forcing jars, as well as domestic pottery. The oldest mention of it is in a will made in 1719 when the pit was already known as Coles Hole after a past owner. In the 1840s Coles Hole was part of Robinson's Brentford Pottery, two of whose chimney pots are displayed in the Museum's Industry Gallery. The Rothschilds purchased the land with the clay pit, the kiln and the outbuildings in 1861 to extend their Gunnersbury estate. They made the pit into a lake, the kiln became a gothic folly with a boat-house, and some of the surrounding area was landscaped with a Victorian artificial rock called Pulhamite after its inventor.

THE BIG CONVERSATION

Though over 40 people signed up for this consultation session on 27 July, far fewer turned up, a frustrating start for the CIC team who had planned it. Nevertheless those present, including several Friends, each joined two discussion groups choosing from five themes – Park Users, Future Developments, Events, Sustainability and Museum & Heritage. Each was chaired by a CIC director or a member of staff.

Annie Tayler, the Marketing and Communications Officer, has sent out full notes of the day and says they plan another similar event. Her report summarises important issues; one of the biggest causes for concern was the CIC's poor communications. Some had missed

events, others only found out about this one through word of mouth. People indicated that a lot of trust in the CIC had been lost as it did not appear to listen or engage with the community enough. They were encouraged that the Big Conversation was happening and hoped it would take place two or three times a year in future.

Two issues came out of the discussions that were matters which the Friends have raised a number of times over the years. One relates to cycling, where sometimes there is a risk of conflict between walkers and fast cyclists, especially on the path parallel with Popes Lane at the north of the Park which can become very busy, while the path along the south of the Park is in very poor condition for both pedestrians and cyclists. In addition there is little parking for cycles. (*Editor's note* - the most recent byelaws for the Park actually ban cycling!). The other issue is that there is little provision to help Park users exercise free of charge, such as a 'trim trail', marked out walking routes or perhaps outdoor gym equipment.

Comments from our committee members who attended included the suggestion that they would have welcomed a reporting back session at the end, to share what different groups had covered, though it would have needed fewer themes and tighter time planning.

SPORTS UPDATE

Ealing Council is running the Sports Hub project. Simon Cranmer, the CIC's Operations and Commercial Manager, tells us that the artificial grass pitches are complete and the contractor, GLL (t/a Better) which will run them, hopes to open them in late September primarily for use by the funding bodies – principally Brentford FC, the University of West London, the International School of London and Old Actonians. Grass pitches will take far longer to become established. The cladding on the huge Centre was being installed last week, in the soft green colour we campaigned for. Despite delays Ealing Council still expects that practical completion of the Centre will be in mid-November, which could lead to an opening date of January 2020. Though the old nurseries formerly used by PHS/Greenscene have now been completely cleared, we understand no funding is available for creating the proposed new car park there nor for upgrading the existing parking area, which may present practical problems in the long term.

LOVEBOX AND GUNNERSVILLE

At a public meeting on 8 August the promoters reviewed Lovebox. The audience had been 86,496 in all (84,052 paid-for tickets, 2,444 free), down from 110,915 in 2018. Social media comments described a lacklustre event with harsh security and high extra charges. Increased competition from similar events in London parks might explain lower numbers. While press reports had suggested Lovebox was moving to Wanstead Flats, we were told that the 2020 festival at Gunnersbury will be on 12-14 June.

The 31 arrests and 361 people having medical treatment were similar to 2018. About 140 phone or email complaints were about traffic, noise and anti-social behaviour and there had been confusion about traffic permits and road closures. The promoters felt so few complaints were a sign of success but the general feeling was that people didn't bother to complain as they felt it wouldn't make any difference. Noise was thought to have been better managed this year with sound systems all pointing south.

Advance information went to residents west, north and east of the park while noise complaints came primarily from the south. Some said rubbish clearing and traffic management were handled better this year, others that they would put up with noise and difficulties because participants really enjoyed the event – and the income helped Gunnersbury's sustainability.

We watched departing crowds on Saturday night and saw them steered over the North Circular in groups which filled Gunnersbury Lane back to the junction. Plans to divert crowds to Ealing Broadway along the North Circular were ineffective; Elderberry Avenue residents on the shortest route there suffered noise from pedestrians and from late evening traffic with hooting horns, collecting festival goers. The taxi exit (junction of Lionel Road and Popes Lane) added to congestion in nearby streets.

Gunnersville was a smaller scale event over one weekend, not 2 as originally proposed. It has been licensed 'in perpetuity'. A Q&A session on 23 August revealed that about 8,000 tickets per night were likely to be sold to audiences older than for Lovebox, attracted by well-established bands. The planning application described them as 'compliant'! The marquee had open sides on the east, south and north; it seems to have disturbed fewer local people than Lovebox but the bass was very audible in Chiswick. Some side roads were closed but Popes Lane stayed open, the North Circular was narrowed and Gunnersbury Lane was closed for departing crowds. Most had left by 10.45pm. Our sense was that events of this scale were much more suitable for Gunnersbury Park and its surroundings.

SMALL MANSION & STABLES

The Gunnersbury Development Trust has received more funding from the Architectural Heritage Fund to develop proposals for cultural and community use of these two buildings. The two councils have won funds from Historic England and £2.3million from Highways England for specialist surveys and works to reduce deterioration in the structure of the two buildings.

THE CURVE

We breathed sighs of relief in late July when the Secretary of State refused the appeal by the developer of a 32-storey block, The Curve, at Chiswick Roundabout, over-ruling the Planning Inspector who felt that the high quality of the design outweighed the harm it would do to its setting, which includes two conservation areas plus Kew Gardens and Gunnersbury Park.

But in early September the developer announced that they would take action in the High Court against this decision. Our unofficial advice is that this may not succeed as it can only focus on the process rather than revisiting planning issues. You can see the Secretary of State's letter and the Inspectors' Report on gunnersburyfriends.org.

CIC CHAIRMAN

Local resident David Babington Smith has become Chairman of the CIC board. An entrepreneur who has been involved in several not-for-profit ventures, he is now involved in a hotel company. His interests are in history, archaeology, business mentoring and urban development.

WINTER PROGRAMME

After a busy summer with many events in the Museum and Park, the new brochure is being sent out with this Newsletter. You can download it along with details of other events at visitgunnersbury.org

CAPEL MANOR

While we will be holding our AGM on the Capel Manor site at Gunnersbury, it is worth returning for the next Open Day at the College on Saturday 12 October. It starts at 10am and admission is free. It is a great chance to see inside the 18th century walled garden and to meet some of the horticultural and animal care students.

SCALA BOOK

Over 1,500 copies of Scala's beautifully produced book on *Gunnersbury Park: the Place and the People*, have been sold.

Send one as a Christmas gift that is easy to post – it is on sale from the Museum or the Café.

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We will be preparing the next issue of the *Newsletter* in December. As always, your comments and contributions of news, images and ideas are very welcome. Please send them to The Newsletter Editor at 25 Hartington Road W4 3TL or email them to us at info@gunnersburyfriends.org

OPEN HOUSE, Sunday 22 September

As part of the architecture festival, there will be free guided tours of Park and Museum as well as a chance to see inside The Temple and the Bathhouse. No advance booking, places will be allocated at the reception desk in the Museum, first come, first served, on the day. Tours of the **Large Mansion/Museum** take place at 11am and 1.30pm, and **Heritage Gardens** tours at 11am and 1.30pm. You can also visit the **Gillian Clegg Archives Room** during the hours of 10am – 12 noon and 1 – 3.30pm, no booking necessary. The Archivist will show some of the photos, posters, books and maps in the collections and answer your questions.

THE QUILTING PROJECT

The Friends obtained a Co-op Community Grant towards an unusual project inspired by an early quilt in the museum collection. A special exhibition will open in mid-October (see details in the winter brochure).

Our funding contribution is supporting the community engagement elements of the project to build interest in the exhibition and involve local people through practical workshops. Several local quilt groups are supporting the exhibition by creating handling samples to show visitors the techniques used in creating the Acton Quilt. We hope to organise a group visit for Friends before the exhibition closes in January 2020. There will be related talks on 2, 3 and 30 November and a miniature quilt-making workshop on 5 December. You need to book and pay a fee to join in – full details are in the brochure.

WEDDING FAIR, Sunday 10 November

Gunnersbury's first ever wedding fair is now being promoted on the visitgunnersbury.org website and via the Eventbrite online ticketing site. The publicity suggests that visitors will have the chance to sample canapés, enjoy a glass of bubbly and see Gunnersbury as a beautiful venue all dressed up for a big event! You will find wedding planners and experts as well as a range of photographers, caterers, florists, entertainment acts and many more suppliers to help create a perfect day. Events such as weddings will help bring in income to support Gunnersbury in the future. For more information contact venuehire@ealing.gov.uk or 020 8825 6060.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Our *Newsletter* is posted to all members 3 times a year. Subscriptions are renewable in April and cost £10, payable by Standing Order or by cheque. Subscriptions and donations attract Gift Aid and we are happy to discuss the possibility of legacies to support our work for the Park and Museum.

Do encourage others to join as greater numbers make us stronger and increase our funds. You can find a membership form on our website at gunnersburyfriends.org/friends/join-the-friends. You can contact the Membership Secretary at 62 Creffield Road, London W3 9PS.

If you haven't yet renewed your membership for 2019-20 please do so in time for the AGM