

FRIENDS OF GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

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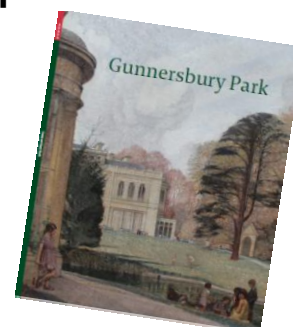


ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 10am, 18 SEPTEMBER 2021

All members with valid subscriptions are warmly invited to the Friends' Annual General Meeting. This will once again be a Zoom meeting. Please email info@gunnersburyfriends.org if you would like to take part. You will then be included in the list of participants who will receive the Zoom link near the meeting date.

GUNNERSBURY PARK: THE PLACE & THE PEOPLE, 16 September 2021

A joint event, promoted by both the Museum and the Friends, this on-line talk takes place on 16 September at 6.30pm. Val Bott and James Wisdom will present the story of the estate which they recounted in their book of the same title, issued by Scala Publications in 2018. Their research revealed beautiful prints, drawings and photos from the Museum's own collection, from the Rothschild Archive in London and the Royal Collection at Windsor, which will be shared in the talk. Tickets have to be booked in advance at £10, but don't forget that Friends benefit from a 10% discount if you use the code 'FOGP' at the checkout.



DONATIONS FROM THE FRIENDS



We have continued to make our annual donation of £3,000 towards horticultural work in the Park, especially where it involves Capel Manor students. The committee has also approved in principle a donation to support specialist conservation work on the carved and gilded oval frame for the *Four Seasons* ceiling painting in the Long Gallery. This suffered damage when it was removed and has been in store for some years. Details of the exact cost are being finalised.

PLANNING MATTERS

Hounslow Council's Planning Department recently approved applications on car parking at Gunnersbury and replacing the 1931 Bowls Green with a commercial golf-themed attraction called Putt in the Park. Both applications were made by external operators and were of poor quality. The Friends committee was very concerned and we submitted detailed comments, in particular opposing the loss of the Bowls Green. Putt in the Park had submitted landscaping plans and a construction programme – we thought the course ugly and were concerned that there will be 6 months' work, with concrete, hardcore and fake turf. Putt in the Park were required to reinstate the site if they closed the attraction and to take advice on hedging to screen it. On parking we recognised the need to better control long-term parking and the potential for an important income stream to support the estate. However, we felt the designs proposed for the signage were inappropriate and the wording used was unfriendly. As these are not planning matters we hope the CIC will negotiate a more attractive welcome for visitors arriving at Gunnersbury.

WATERWORKS ELECTRONIC MUSIC EVENT

This will be on Saturday, 25 September, aimed at an audience in their late twenties. At an online consultation, the organisers explained their plan to minimise crowding by issuing the 13,000 tickets for phased arrivals at 1pm, 2.30pm and 4pm. Participants are being urged to use public transport. Supervised access will run from the Popes Lane gate down through the Park to the usual events site. The 6 stages will face inwards; noise will be managed, in part to avoid competition between them. The organisers are working with the Hounslow Safety Advisory Group to plan the management of the event, and undertook to follow up participants' comments about managing what goes on outside the Park during and after the event.

THE FRIENDS 40TH ANNIVERSARY – LOOKING FORWARD

When the Friends started 40 years ago, historic buildings had already been lost through decay and demolition, and years of under-funding had taken their toll on the Park and Museum. The most significant moment in the long struggle to enhance Gunnersbury has been the recent restoration project.

For many regular park users and people who simply knew the park had its problems, that project seemed to be the end of the story. It halted the decline, gave hope for the future, tackled some of the most urgent and important issues and did some excellent work. But it was only the start of the process.

There is still major restoration work to be done, and investment is needed to ensure the Park delights both today's and tomorrow's visitors. What might we be doing over the next 40 years?

- We will need to keep a close eye on changes in what people want from their park. For example, the new wildflower meadow has been a huge success, but no one now expects to buy a deckchair ticket. Do people want picnics or barbecues? Jogging or Tai Chi? And there will be a huge increase in people living in new

apartments near the park, and many will be young families.

- Fears of climate change and concern for the environment is growing. Visitors will almost certainly expect their park to be at the forefront of good green practice.

- We are a good way into planning for the restoration of the Small Mansion and Stables, with estimates of the costs and consideration of possible uses, but the work could take some years to complete.

- Behind the Orangery, the addition of a service wing with toilets and catering space was dropped from the restoration project to save money, but this would make a huge difference to bringing life back to that building.

- Something wonderful could be built on the derelict Model Farm and changing rooms in the middle of the park. Or it could be grassed over.

- The gatehouse and south-west entrance to the park is going to be more heavily used. The Potomac Tower is decaying rapidly – is there a use for it, if and when it is restored?

- The Park's gardening staff and the grounds maintenance contractors need a secure compound to take deliveries, protect equipment, cultivate plants, compost the green arisings, look after volunteers, etc.

- Does the park have the best play and exercise equipment for all its visitors: children, teenagers, adults and retired people?

- With more and bigger vehicles and pedestrians being squeezed against the wall – will we ever be able to sort out difficulties with the Popes Lane entrance to the main car park?

- If we complete the Orangery, upgrade the Model Farm and restore the Stables, how do we provide appropriate vehicle access to them?

- Undoubtedly the paths need improving, maybe widening if the amount of cycling increases. But are they the right paths, to the right places? There are desire lines in significant parts of the park, and congestion points in other parts, which suggest perhaps not.

- How do we make up for the 'democratic deficit' – to develop the model of governance from distant ownership to engaged trusteeship and build such positive support that the Park and Museum can never be allowed to slip back into decline.

This is a short list, and everyone reading it will have at least one more to add. Perhaps we might need more than another 40 years!

SMALL MANSION & STABLES

The feasibility study which we helped to fund is now complete. It will inform the ambitious process of bidding for grants and other funding to restore them which has to come next.

Behind the scaffolding, work to reduce further deterioration of the Small Mansion continues, funded by Historic England and by Highways England.

'MADDY'S LOCKDOWN PICTURES'

The CIC website features a lively piece about local resident, Maddy, who challenged herself to produce 100 photos of Gunnersbury in 100 days of lock-down. As the pictures had a feel-good factor, she shared them daily with a group of friends and got everyone talking about how amazing the Park is. For her Gunnersbury Park was 'an absolute joy. It was very up-lifting observing the change of seasons and all the new life!' She says it's impossible fully to describe the role Gunnersbury Park played for her during lockdown. 'It was definitely my sanctuary, something to look forward to each day during a challenging time.'

A great deal has been written during the pandemic about the sense of well-being and the real pleasure parks have given to their visitors. This is a lovely personal expression of that pleasure.

NEW ADDITIONS TO THE MUSEUM DISPLAYS

The Museum has now re-opened and Amy Dobson, Assistant Curator, reports

The enamel panel made by Edith Dawson, with a silver and ebony frame by her husband Nelson, is now on show for the first time. It was bought with individual donations, big grants, and funds from the Friends. See the Museum's charming film about it and the Dawsons here: <https://youtu.be/Sntf8jKJ-8I>.



The Dawson panel

Another exhibit is especially topical. The Museum recently acquired a full fencing kit from Dimitri Coutya, Paralympian and world champion wheelchair fencer from Ealing. He used the fencing mask in the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games and he will compete in the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics.

Last year the Museum received a grant from the Museums Association/Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund, which allowed us to catalogue, digitise and exhibit images from the Ealing Studios/Roy Gough photography collection in a brand-new outdoor exhibition. This could be viewed even though the Museum was closed. We have decided to extend the exhibition until the autumn as it has had wonderful feedback from Park visitors and volunteers. Kathryn and I recently had the pleasure of welcoming Janet Rose, cousin of Beryl Booth-Gough and bridesmaid at the couple's wedding. Thanks to the sterling work of the project's volunteers, Janet was able to flick through some beautifully re-packaged photographs by her late cousin, enjoyed a walk around the outdoor exhibition and shared some wonderful memories with us.



BANK HOLIDAY OPENING The Park will be open as usual. The Museum will be closed on Thursday 26 August, then open 12 to 4.30pm on Friday 27th, Saturday 28th, Sunday 29th and Monday 30 August.

GARETH BRETTELL

Since May 2019 Gareth has co-ordinated Formal Learning at Gunnersbury, ranging from early years school children to adults.



With a History degree and Postgraduate Certificate in Education, he first worked as a primary school teacher. When he became increasingly interested in the idea of other forms of learning he went to the RAF Museum in Hendon to work with families as an 'explainer', then studied for an MA in Museum Studies at Leicester University.

Before coming to Gunnersbury Gareth gained varied museum experience with posts at ThinkTank, the re-invented industrial museum in Birmingham, at Cannon Hall in Barnsley, which has a Victorian mansion in a park like Gunnersbury, then at the Submarine Museum in Gosport and the Historic Dockyard at Portsmouth.

He has delivered some of the sessions at Gunnersbury himself, alongside the team of permanent Learning Assistants, and he books freelancers to cover for staff or work on specific projects. This has helped him to discover who uses the learning programmes at Gunnersbury and why. Gareth is keen to increase the range of users, especially to draw in secondary schools, and he also hopes to develop high quality on-line resources and loan boxes in the future.

Sadly, the arrival of the pandemic meant a long period of very limited work with schools, since his post was furloughed and the Museum was closed due to lockdowns and pandemic rules. However, as things have eased, and the formal learning team is back in the Museum, Gareth is very much looking forward to working with many more educational groups in the future. We last saw him pushing a wheel-barrow of learning resources towards the nature trail, with a procession of young children and their mums and carers, in tow!

JULIA MATTINGLEY

Julia joined the CIC team on 16 August as Operations Manager, a very important post which has been vacant for a long time.

She writes 'My background is in hospitality, having started work in the family hotel business. From there I progressed on to the management of pubs, restaurants, cafés, retail units and multi-site conference & event venues. I have over 25 years' experience, most recently gained from working in various

roles in the university sector, managing all commercial services across multiple campuses.

My most recent role was Head of Commercial Services at Imperial College Union, an independent charity, where I worked with a wide range of customers and clients ranging from student clubs & societies, to the BBC when working to deliver the Proms programme of events.

I'm really looking forward to joining the Gunnersbury team and working with stakeholders and the community to secure a strong future for the Museum and Park.'

FRIENDS' DISCOUNT

Don't forget to claim 10% off by showing your membership card in the Museum shop or using the code "FOGP" when shopping online at <https://shop.visitgunnersbury.org/>

GUNNERSBURY EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

There are now so many things to do at Gunnersbury that the best way to discover what's on is to use the website at visitgunnersbury.org where you can subscribe to email updates. Also keep an eye on gunnersburyfriends.org.

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We will assemble the next *Newsletter* in October. Comments and contributions, images, news and ideas are always welcome. Please send them to The Editor at 25 Hartington Road W4 3TL or email to info@gunnersburyfriends.org

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Thank you to the many Friends who pay subscriptions by Standing Order. Gift Aid can be claimed on these and on donations, and we are happy to discuss possible legacies to support our work. Do encourage others to join to increase our numbers and add to the funding for grants to Park and Museum. Contact the Membership Secretary at The Manor House, Ampney St Peter, Cirencester, Gloucs GL7 5SH. gunnersburyfriends.org/friends/join-the-friends

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