

FRIENDS OF GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

NEWSLETTER

NO 114
MAY 2020



FROM THE EDITOR

Huge apologies are due for the long period since the last *Newsletter*. So this is a bumper edition with as much current information as we have been able to obtain. News posts on gunnersburyfriends.org should have kept many of you up to date, but if you have not yet given us an email address or have changed this recently, please inform the Membership Secretary. Then you will receive each news post when it is added.

SUBSCRIPTIONS DUE 1 APRIL 2020

Thanks go to all of you who have arranged a standing order with your bank to pay the annual subscription. The Friends organisation needs to sustain its income so that we can continue to contribute grants to Park and Museum and carry on our practice of sharing information about the Gunnersbury estate.

If we do not have a record of a standing order for you a membership form will be enclosed with this Newsletter so that you can arrange payment. If you felt able to create a standing order we would be really delighted as it reduces the administration required to manage the membership records!

FRIENDS' NEW MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Richard Barnett, who has been managing our membership records since 2016, has now stepped down and we thank him warmly for his diligent work. Sonya Leydecker, a long-standing trustee of the Friends, has now taken on this role. You will find her contact details on the last page of this *Newsletter*.

THE LOCKDOWN: COPING WITH COVID-19

The Museum, café, playgrounds, tennis courts, public toilets and car park have been closed for some weeks, and Gunnersbury's public programme is suspended for the time being. During this stressful period of the lockdown the Park is providing a much-valued open space, open 7am to dusk, and is being very well used. It appears to have attracted many new visitors who are providing very positive feedback.

Most of the staff have been furloughed, but the Chief Executive, David Bowler, with Chris Ellis and his garden team, are keeping things going on site. The Park is looking very beautiful, as a result of their imaginative planting over the last 18 months or so and continuing careful maintenance. Some Friends have particularly remarked upon the quality of the bulb beds, the Italian Garden wisteria and the recently re-created rose-basket beds. After a tendering process a new grounds maintenance contractor, Idverde, has replaced Ealing Council's team and seems to be making a good start. The CIC issued this statement: "We are committed to staying open as long as possible seven days a week for our local community to exercise. Please follow Government guidance at all times, keeping two metres apart, and keep all dogs on leads. Remember to check our website and social media accounts to keep up to date with Park news".

REFURBISHING THE SMALL MANSION & STABLES

The Gunnersbury Development Trust (GDT) has received a second grant from the Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF) to support a feasibility study by Jura Consultants and an architectural study of the buildings by Rodney Melville & Partners. The CIC, the GDT and the Friends have also contributed funds towards the cost of this work. Jura produced a very useful report funded by the first AHF grant and this helped make the case for new external funding. Highways England has made grants from their Designated Fund for Cultural Heritage, designed to help reduce the road network's impact on the historic environment. They provided a sum of £90,000 towards the cost of specialist surveys of these Listed Buildings in 2019 and a further £250,000 to support the design costs for repairing the buildings followed. Historic England provided £280,000 towards the specialist surveys and has subsequently given a further £203,000 towards this project.

TREASURED THREADS

Instead of our seasonal winter walk in the Park a group of Friends joined an indoor walk around the Museum's quilting exhibition, *Treasured Threads*, in November. Our guide, Susie Batchelor, is herself a quilt-maker and shared her expertise and enthusiasm us.

The centrepiece is the Acton Quilt, made locally in about 1810 (shown in the photo). It features traditional geometric patterns in various textiles and includes panels with pictorial appliqué scenes from the Bible.



The exhibition and an associated events programme, including a quilting bee, were part funded by a grant from the Co-op obtained by the Friends.

ROTHSCHILD CHAIRS FROM GUNNERSBURY



Cristina Alfonsin, Collections Manager at the Waddesdon Foundation, reports that late last year they acquired a pair of hall chairs associated with Gunnersbury. Christie's estimated the price at £4,000 to £6,000 but we do not know the price realised at auction.

These mahogany chairs carry the label of London makers, S Jewell of High Holborn. Each has a panel on the back painted with the arms of Rothschild impaled with Cohen (for the marriage of Nathan Mayer and his wife Hannah) and they were probably commissioned by the couple for their new home at Gunnersbury in about 1835.

The decorative hall chairs – hard flat seats like these were not for lounging upon! – were made in a very distinctive style. The auction catalogue described them as having panelled and fret-carved backs, arms with turned and lapetted supports, and legs headed with rosettes. Something to look out for if you visit when Waddesdon re-opens!

CAPEL PRIZE WINNER

For many years the Friends have sponsored an annual prize for the Capel Manor student who has made the greatest contribution to Gunnersbury. The 2019 winner is Matthew Charlton whose tutor writes: "Matthew has been a brilliant Level 2 student this year with much improved confidence in practicals and often helping others in class. Matthew maintained excellent attendance and punctuality through the year. He is always on time and ready to start work regardless of the weather outside. He doesn't select jobs but gets on with whatever needs doing.

When Matthew takes up a task he continues with the work using his own initiatives until the job is completed. This academic year Matthew successfully completed a two x two week work experience placement at Gunnersbury Park for which he received excellent feedback from his work manager".



Matthew Charlton receiving his certificate from Gunnersbury's Centre Manager, Matt Watson

CAR PARKING

The busy lane from Popes Lane towards the car park has been painted with white lines to improve safety for pedestrians using that route. The old car park has undergone repairs and a new parking area has been laid out on the former PHS/Greenscene site to cater for the increased demand which is likely to arise once the sports facilities are opened. It has been planted with trees and shrubs.

The CIC has been concerned about excessive commuter parking; in addition it needed to consider how to raise funds from parking fees. Last autumn's survey of attitudes to car park charges revealed over 60% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they understood the need for charges and over 50% thought a suggested charge of £1 was about the same as comparable locations in London. Over 70% supported free parking for holders of blue badges for people with disabilities. So the CIC now proposes to charge £1 for a 2-hour stay rather than £1 per hour, with blue badge parking free for 2 hours. They are likely to introduce a season ticket pass, for £80 a year, allowing 3 hours parking on any one visit when the car park is open. They were intending to introduce the charges this spring, but the car park has been closed for some weeks as part of the lockdown.

LOST EVENTS & FUNDING PROBLEMS

The closure of the Museum meant the loss of income from weddings and functions, from school visits and the shop. Delays in the construction of the sports facilities meant that as much as 2 years' income from this source had already been lost. On 27 March the Lovebox management announced that they could not go ahead with this event but that planned to return on 11-13 June 2021. The Secret Cinema event, whose organisers had shown a very thoughtful approach at a public consultation meeting, has also been cancelled.

An innovation planned for 2020 was Shakespeare in the Park. The Lord Chamberlain's Men, the UK's premier all male theatre company, was bringing its production of *Macbeth*. This has now been cancelled so the company has made their 2018 production of *The Tempest* available online at [http://www.tlcm.co.uk/until the end of May](http://www.tlcm.co.uk/until_the_end_of_May).

We understand that this will mean a loss of something like £600,000 income for the CIC though LBs Hounslow and Ealing, which own the estate, will continue to provide some funding. Given the pressures on local authorities due to Covid-19 there seems little possibility that they could contribute additional funding to support the CIC.

HISTORIC APPLE VARIETIES

Tim Henderson, who works as a garden volunteer, particularly in the Community Orchard at Gunnersbury has been keeping us informed of progress. He is enthusiastic about obtaining varieties of fruit trees which have local connections.

Cuttings from surviving specimens of 2 old apples were grafted onto new root stock and have been planted at Gunnersbury. The Mayor of Hounslow, Cllr Tony Louki, and the Deputy Lord Lieutenant officiated at the planting last November. The *Hounslow Wonder*, suitable for eating, cooking and juice, was introduced by Spooner's nursery in 1910; examples were traced to Wisley and Brogden. The *Feltham Beauty*, a desert apple, was given an RHS Award of Garden Merit in 1908.

CIC SOCIAL MEDIA

The CIC website was relaunched at www.visitgunnersbury.org on May. This is the place to go for news of what is happening on the estate. You can sign up for email updates there.

On the CIC Twitter account you'll find regular stories about the Park, the museum collections and how the estate is being managed. @Gunnersbury1

NEW NOTICEBOARDS

One of the issues raised at the first Big Conversation was poor communication on the part of the CIC.

A modest improvement has come with the installation of new notice boards, to reduce the number of weather-beaten posters on the Park railings.



The *Spring Grove Codlin* was developed by a Herefordshire gardener; he offered it to Sir Joseph Banks who named it in 1810 after his Isleworth mansion (now West Thames College).

A specimen has been found in the garden once owned by T A Knight, who introduced it, and cuttings may eventually be obtained for planting locally.

SPORTS UPDATE

When the Covid-19 lockdown was imposed, the Sports Hub building was incomplete and the contractor closed down and left the site. Following a brief inter-regnum due the virus, work has recommenced on the hub and surrounding ground. It is hard to know exactly what work is being undertaken to the interior, but it is clear that finishing works are underway and that the services are being run and commissioned.



The huge hub building, looking north east in mid March. This shows the importance of our campaign for green cladding rather than black



Looking east across the pitches, the earth mound left is for levelling and landscaping, the temporary roadway runs towards the hub Photo: Kevin Mahoney

Grounds maintenance has begun on the grass pitches but a lot of work remains to be done if they are to be fit for purpose by the start of the next football season, whenever that may be. There is still much to do if the handover date, which we understand to be sometime in June, is to be met.

Right: the hard dry pitches after mowing, looking south, May



Externally much has been done to remove builders' debris from the perimeter although the roadway is still in place. It will take a considerable effort to remove this, re-lay the grass and let it mature before it can be brought back into use, likely to be a rather difficult process given the current dry conditions.

THE BOWLS CLUB

The Friends were approached at our September AGM to support the Bowls Club, established in 1931. Despite its small membership, mainly of older people, the Club had, since the 1980s, maintained the pavilion and green to a high standard in lieu of rent. The CIC was now seeking a rent and an increase of membership to justify this use of the site. The

Club could not fulfill this demand and after a few months closed down.

The CIC was attracted by the opportunity of bringing golf back into the Park on this site – the original pitch and putt was closed as part of the regeneration works. They have worked with Putt in the Park, which has several London sites including Acton Park, charging £9 per adult (£7 concessions) and £28 per family. The firm's planning application to convert the bowling green for golf, to extend the pavilion for use as a café and a new gate near the car park, was rejected in April. Another application will have to be submitted. There was to be a second Benugo café in the Hub but cost over-runs meant this was removed, so this second café may be welcomed by Park users.

RECENT WORK ON GARDENS AND LANDSCAPE



The **Spring Bulbs** have been spectacular. Scarlet and yellow tulips beside the museum were *Gold Apeldoorn* and *World Peace*. At the Round Pond tulip *Ballerina* in orange and the beetroot purple *Caravella* were followed in May by *Narcissus Poeticus*, the Pheasant's Eye Daffodil. And the Italian Garden's pastel palette has seen white tulip *Viridiflora Spring Green* and tulip *White Triumphator*.

Rose Basket Beds Capel Manor College students on the Professional Gardening course submitted 20 invaluable designs to a specific brief for the beds (right). The Friends' gift of £3,000, aimed at encouraging work with Capel Manor students, paid for the planting undertaken by volunteers from GSK. The new 'handles' have been made by Hot Metal Works forge at the London Museum of Water & Steam.



Wild Flower Meadow and Nature Trail hedgerow



The meadow was cut last autumn and thistle and dock are being strimmed out. There has been no new seeding – it will be interesting to see what emerges this summer. Along the meadow's nature trail verge the garden team have planted a new hedgerow, to create a wildlife enclosure for pollinating insects, nesting birds, and small mammals. Chris Ellis, Head Gardener, reports that the hedge has hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, field maple *Acer campestre*, crab apple *Malus sylvestris*, dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, and dog rose *Rosa canina*. The team has created a bee bank along the entire length of the foot of the hedgerow. This low south-facing mound is sunny, well drained, free from vegetation and ideal for ground-nesting solitary bees.

Herbaceous Border

The very overgrown bed on the north side of the path from the playground to the Round Pond has been rejuvenated with some new planting. Autumn bulb planting will give it spring colour. The plan is to undertake the work with some of the Capel Manor students and it will be funded by the next gift of £3,000 from the Friends.



GUNNERSBURY STAFF CHANGES



There have been some staff changes over the last few months, in part because some posts were on short-term funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. Susie Batchelor has left, Curator Julia Tubman is on maternity leave and Assistant Curator Amy Dobson has been making short films about the collections and appearing on Twitter regularly. The Operations Manager, Simon Cranmer, has departed for a new life with his wife and their baby triplets.

Ciaran Biggins (left) joined as Business Development Manager in late April. He will lead on income generation and developing strong mutually beneficial external partnerships. He has worked in the charity sector for over 10 years with senior fund-raising roles at the NSPCC, Scope, Teenage Cancer Trust and Mind. He is the Founder of MindFood, an Ealing charity running nature-based courses to improve well-being. He is a fellow of the School for Social Entrepreneurs and has been a trustee of Mind in Ealing and Hounslow, MAC UK and Action West London. An Acton resident he is a long-time visitor and fan of . He is excited about the new role and looks forward to meeting and working with Friends of Gunnersbury in the near future.

THREATS FROM DEVELOPMENT

The Curve, Bollo Bridge Road,
Bottom of N Circular, etc

If we need another space filler we can include a para on 18th century Furnese research

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

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions are renewable on 1 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, with which to make grants to Park and Museum. The subscription form is here: gunnersburyfriends.org/friends/join-the-friends. You can contact the Membership Secretary at The Manor House, Ampney St Peter, Cirencester, Gloucestershire GL7 5SH