

FRIENDS OF GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

NEWSLETTER NO 117 JANUARY 2022



BEST WISHES FOR 2022 TO ALL FRIENDS

CIC UPDATE

The Park has remained busy and the Museum's limited opening hours and activity programme have continued, although several staff have been infected with Covid-19.

The Gunnersbury CIC has received a grant of £187,795, their third from the **Culture Recovery Fund**, a Government emergency funding scheme which is run through the Arts Council. The CIC's announcement states that it will be invested in support for long-term commercial recovery from the impact of the pandemic and ensuring that Gunnersbury's operations become more sustainable.

The weekly **Farmers' Market** run by RMS does not seem to have applied for a licence or planning permission, leaving local residents and some Friends anxious about the potential damage to the top part of the field which it would cause during wet winter weather. We understand that it was intended to occupy the hard-standing beside the new car park but that makes more income for the CIC when let to film companies. RMS has announced that their 'trial trading period' would come to an end on Sunday 30 January but they hope to hold some one-off markets at Gunnersbury in the future.

Planning permission for rebuilding the **Café and Carriage Display** was granted last summer. Since Hounslow Council wished to modify the power supplies to make it a greener, more sustainable, building work has not yet begun, though a contractor has been identified. We have been advised that it is likely to take at least a year for completion, once works have started on site. Catering vans will continue to offer refreshments in the Park.

Car parking charges have not yet been introduced. We have no details but we understand that further work on the infrastructure is required; the delay must be causing substantial losses to the CIC budget.

UPDATE FROM THE FRIENDS COMMITTEE

We reported in *Newsletter* 116 that the committee had agreed a donation to cover the cost of conserving and reinstating the gilt frame to the *Four Seasons* ceiling painting in the Long Gallery. The sum required is about £7,000. The work has been undertaken by Plowden & Smith and it has proved more complex than anticipated. During February Plowden's decorative arts conservator will bring the sections and undertake installation and detailed finishing on site. Museum staff will photograph and film the work in progress. We hope to arrange a modest Friends' event at the Museum, when the pandemic allows, to celebrate re-instating the frame and completing the restoration of this beautiful room which earns income from events.

Two committee members – Patrick Salaün and Steve Larcombe – take responsibility for monitoring our investments and meet our advisers at Sarasin regularly. As a result they recommended to our December meeting that it would be wise to switch the 75% of our investments currently held in the Endowment Fund to Sarasin's Climate Active Endowment Fund, which in Environmental, Social, and Governance terms is more closely aligned with achieving the Paris Accord Climate goals. We agreed that this was particularly appropriate for a charity which had the sustainability of a park as one of its aims. Sarasin had advised that over the past 5 years, this fund had marginally out-performed the Endowment Fund and that the balance of risk was very similar. This change was implemented in January.

THE GOVERNANCE OF THE GUNNERSBURY ESTATE & MUSEUM

When new governance arrangements were proposed in 2014, as part of the regeneration of Gunnersbury, the Friends submitted detailed comments. Our committee included people with expertise in setting up heritage charities and the transfer of local authority museums to trusts. We advised that the parent body

should be a trust to which an operational company would covenant its surplus income. The project board chose instead to create a community interest company, wholly controlled by the two directors nominated respectively by the local authority owners of the estate, and a separate charity, the Gunnersbury Development Trust (GDT). The director for Ealing was Keith Townsend who acted both as chairman of the CIC and the council officer responsible for monitoring the CIC's work, a clear conflict of interest.

Ealing's project officers took so long to set up the charity that most of the contracts on site had been let and there was

little chance of obtaining grants as work has already started.

Furthermore, trusts and foundations were wary of giving grants to a charity which could not guarantee how they would be spent by a separate body.

The GDT has tried to work closely with the CIC but the latter has operated very independently, often with little regard for the impact of what it does upon the community. However, over the last 18 months, with the support of a very able external adviser, Steve Wyler, board members of both organisations have been meeting, usually on-line, to discuss a strategy for the future and to agree how to improve governance. With careful legal advice many difficulties have been ironed out and proposals for a parent trust with a subsidiary operational company were approved in January by the Cabinets of both LB Ealing and LB Hounslow.

Over the next few months two continuity trustees will be selected from each existing organisation and there will be a recruitment process for a new chairman and some new trustees. The existing Trust will form the parent body with a revised constitution and will manage some of the staff directly; others will remain with the revised CIC. The aim is to have all of this in place before the election in May.

Full details of the new governance arrangements which have now been approved are available on gunnersburyfriends.org.

A NEW CIC BOARD MEMBER



Sacha Rathore joined the CIC board in the autumn. A local resident with a keen interest in health, well-being and community development, she is employed as Public Health Officer for Hounslow Council. She acts as co-lead for the Community Champions Programme, working with the diverse residents of Hounslow to improve health and well-being services in the borough, ensuring they are made culturally appropriate, visible and accessible.

She holds a BSc in Social Anthropology and an MSc in Medical Anthropology. Whilst studying, Sacha worked part-time for Air France and so travelled the world extensively, immersing herself in different cultures. She also has experience in the charity sector (Terrence Higgins Trust) as well as the private sector (G2Speech, BMI Healthcare and BUPA).

SAKURA CHERRY TREES

Regular users of the Park will have spotted the new grove of young cherry trees which have been planted to the south of the Stables. They are the gift of the national Sakura Cherry Tree project; they were planted in November by the CIC gardens team and students from Capel Manor College. Details at <https://japanuksakura.org/>

Michael Rowan, who lived in the Small Mansion when he was Hounslow's Parks Manager, has brokered the arrangement on

behalf of the Gunnersbury Development Trust. Sonya Leydecker will represent the Friends as a partner to the Trust on the working party which is now creating a celebration in mid March. This will be when the blossom on the trees should be emerging and it also has to take place before the period known as 'purdah', which closes down events connected to local authorities in the run up to the May elections

The Japan-UK Sakura team will also be involved along with a range of appropriate dignitaries, including the Mayors of the two boroughs that own the Park, possibly the ambassador, perhaps business sponsors for the UK scheme and representatives of the local Japanese community who live nearby as well as the Capel Manor students who did the planting. This may provide an opportunity to talk about our hopes that the Rothschilds' Japanese Garden may one day be restored. And we hope that a visit to see the cherry blossom each spring will become a significant Gunnersbury event.

THE SMALL MANSION & STABLES: WORK IN PROGRESS

David Cattell is the architect from Rodney Melville + Partners who has overseen restoration work at Gunnersbury for some years. We are often asked what work is going on in the current works on the Small Mansion and East Stables so he has provided this summary.

He writes: In both cases the focus has been to undertake repairs to the structure and external fabric to render both buildings structurally stable and weather tight. The nature of this work is such that the scope of the final repairs is often undetermined until opening up of the structure has been completed, so this is the initial stage of the building contract for both buildings.

East Stables: The flat roof over the whole of the building has now been removed, although the few surviving historic trusses and purlins at the north end of the building are to be retained and repaired. The replacement roof introduced over the southern end of the building has been removed entirely, having reached the end of its life.

The new roof over the entire building is to be set at a slightly higher level to provide increased headroom at first floor level and space for roof insulation. Works are currently in hand to repair and build up the parapet walls to support this new flat roof arrangement.

Small Mansion: Investigation of the existing chimneys was the first stage of the works following erection of the access scaffolding, and opening up of the render finishes to permit brickwork and render repairs continues. The roof structure over the west end of the building, comprising the oldest areas of the mansion, has now been exposed, with slates stripped from the roof slopes and the modern parapet wall partially dismantled.

This action has exposed an earlier roof arrangement within the current structure, which has been photographically recorded and retained. Works to repair the roof structure and reconstruct the parapet walls to reflect their original decorative form (based on archive information) is in hand. Works to carry out roof repairs to the eastern (service wing) will commence shortly

The preparatory work was funded by the Architectural Heritage Fund and building work has been funded by generous grants from the Highways Agency and Historic England. The detailed applications for Listed Building Consent can be seen LB Hounslow website you can find full details of the works in the planning search section, ref nos P2020/4441 (Small Mansion) and P/2021/00995 (Stables).

THE WALLED GARDEN

Capel Manor College has occupied the walled garden beside the car park at Gunnersbury since 1984. They have recently renewed their lease taking on much more ground.

This walled garden was created by Henry Furnese MP who owned the estate with a huge Palladian mansion and formal 17th century gardens from 1740 to 1758. He replaced the terraces of planting with the grassy slopes down to the Horseshoe Pond which survive today and enlarged the parkland. He added the Temple and the Round Pond and he had to create a replacement kitchen garden.

A wide vehicle opening with a concrete lintel was cut into the wall after it became a public park; this is the main gate to the College. Parts of the wall need major repairs which include strengthening



North roof, Small Mansion opened up



Decorative chimneys before repairs



the vehicle entrance opening. To achieve this a brick buttress will be added on each side. And a 'brick on edge' capping will be re-instated at the top of the wall in place of the unstable cement rendered capping. The work will all be tied together with stainless steel rods. You can see details of the information submitted for Listed Building Consent on the Hounslow Council website, ref no P/2022/0047.

DINOSAURS AT EASTER

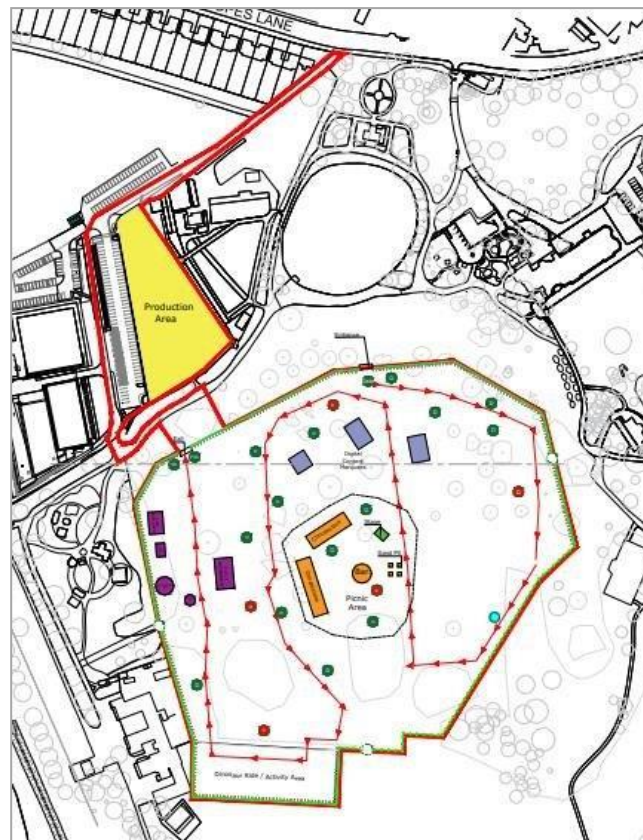
The *Dino Kingdom* attraction hopes to occupy the centre of the Park (the former golf course) from 21 March to 25 April. The event itself will be open from 1 to 18 April at 10 am to 7 pm. This information comes from their planning and licensing applications and an online consultation meeting.

The CIC is keen to support this event because it will appeal to a different audience from the music events. Family videos posted on You Tube show excited children running from one dinosaur to another, having a great time, to their parents' delight. Some families seem to go to all the dinosaur events they can find!

Inside the fenced-off area we are promised a walking trail amongst dinosaurs of varying sizes; a few will be animatronic, with arms moving up and down, tails swaying side-to-side, heads moving up and down, eyes blinking and jaws opening wide with roaring sound effects.

There will be up to 12 food stalls, marquees for activities, a licensed bar, a fun fair, toilets and a stall for themed merchandise. Visits are expected to last around 1½ hours, with 4,000 a day in the week and 6,000 at weekends.

Tickets will have time slots to space out the arrivals. The organisers will warn in the publicity that no parking is available, but at the consultation meeting they said they may have to install stewards on the main gate to turn cars away. If



	Emergency exit
	Medium dinosaur
	Large dinosaur
	Flying dinosaur
	Visitor route
	Fairground rides
	Marquees
	Outdoor stage
	Bar & concessions
	Production area
	Steelshield fencing
	Heras fencing
	Sand pit area

Layout & key based on planning application

families have travelled long distances to get to the event at Gunnersbury the handling of access at the car park entrance may prove to be contentious. This may not be a planning issue but we will certainly be including it in our comments on the *Dino Kingdom* application.

The event is being organised by Proud Events Ltd, an experienced firm which has put together a thorough planning application. They have delivered this attraction before, in Nottingham and Manchester, each time commissioned by Outreach Collective.

This latter company, its predecessors and linked firms such as Weli Creative, have used this model (displays, food, drink, activities and a fun fair) for some years. The mission of Weli Creative has been described as 'to increase the cultural exchange of values and customs between China and the UK.' *Jurassic Kingdom* and *Ice Age: The Lost Kingdom* (which they tried to set up in Gunnersbury in 2018) are just two of the a range of their attractions. Their lantern festival, *Lightopia*, was last presented at Crystal Palace in December 2021.

One of its sponsors has been Zigong Culture and Tourism, a city in Sichuan Province in China, whose website says that 'The City of Zigong has held an International Dinosaur Lantern Festival 25 times since 1964, has presented lantern shows in over 500 cities in China and more than 50 countries abroad, attracting around 400 million visitors.' The city is also a major producer of animatronic dinosaurs.

Sadly, TripAdvisor – a forum for our national sport of complaining – carries disappointing but consistent complaints on these events. These have been about value for money, high charges, parking fees, the quality and cost of food, the extra cost of the funfair and desultory stewarding by young people.

Nevertheless, we are hoping that *Dino Kingdom* at Gunnersbury will be a great experience for all its visitors.

PLANNING ISSUES

Sports hub signage

In mid December the Friends Committee submitted comments on an application from the Brentford FC Community Sports Trust for garish signage to be applied to their area of the Sports Hub. They proposed high level vinyl strips around the corner, external fixed panels along the gabions at body level and similar signage inside the entrance doorway, using their scarlet and black branding.

They seemed to be unaware that Gunnersbury is a Grade II* Registered Park and that the Friends had led a successful campaign to ensure that the colouring of the Hub building was a soft green to minimise its visual impact. We asked that the application should be rejected and that Trust should be advised to work with the CIC to find an appropriate form of signage. At the time of writing the application is still recorded as 'in progress' on LB Hounslow's web site.

Putt in the Park or Pub in the Park?

The bowling green has been ripped up, the pavilion is being rebuilt and Putt in the Park Ltd has applied for a licence to serve alcohol, some details of which need to be contested. They want it to be for 7 days a week, from 8am to 11pm, though the Park closes at dusk (10pm in the summer). Perhaps they expect diners and private parties to leave later? They also promised free access for community and baby and toddler groups from 9 to 11am. They will sell a range of wines and spirits, but not cheap high-strength beer, and their staff will be trained in the responsible sale of alcohol and the age verification scheme Challenge 25.



EVENTS

Secret Cinema

A planning application (Hounslow ref no P/2022/0139) for this immersive cinema event in July has been submitted. Installation at the south-west end of the field would run from 13 June to 12 July, with open rehearsals on 5, 8 and 10 July. Their shows, based upon the film *Dirty Dancing*, would run Wednesday to Sunday 13 to 31 July 2022; dismantling would be 1- 5 August. The audience would be 4,600 a day, with about 400 staff on site.

This very experienced operator took part in the same public consultation event as *Dino Kingdom* (overleaf). They said they had learnt from their 2018 event at Gunnersbury and made some changes – they would not be using the North Circular footbridge for access, they were planning to stagger arrival and departure by phasing the ticket booking times, bringing groups of about 30 people at a time with a steward from Acton Town station to the Park. Taxis and ubers would operate from inside the park to minimise noise and nuisance for neighbours. An experienced community manager would be appointed. Contact them on community@secretgroup.com.

Chiswick Roundabout towers

We continue to monitor planning applications for tall blocks which would have an impact upon views within the Park. One of these, 'The Fourth Mile', was approved in December. It will have 234 flats, a 197-room hotel, a 'technology showcase' building and a public square named after a 1920s owner, the Hudson Motor Co. The Mayor of London will now review the application.

After the rejection of 32-storey block 'The Curve' the same firm has submitted a new application for 'Holly House'. They consulted on a 21-storey design but have applied for 24 storeys. Of these three floors would be business space. From the 3rd to the 12th floor there would be 'affordable' rented housing. The rest, up to the 24th floor, would be private flats.

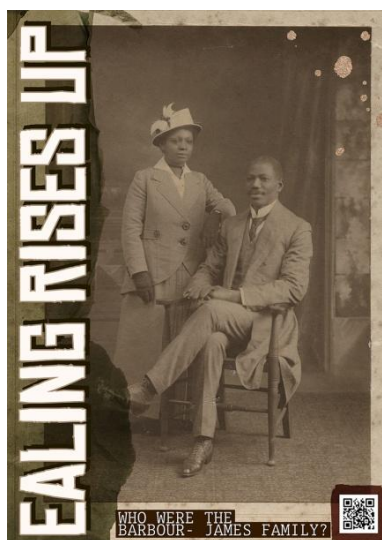
They have chosen to submit misleading photos taken from the bottom of the slope south of the Large Mansion, pretending that the tower would not be visible from the Park. We endorse the detailed submissions of Kew Gardens and the Kew Society which seek rejection of the bid.

Festival Republic Live Music

The CIC is negotiating, subject to contract, planning and licensing approval, events in August which replace Lovebox & Gunnersville from the same organiser. Daily capacity has been reduced from 40,000 to 25,000, reflecting feedback from residents and stakeholders.

There will be public meetings in February; a new Community Liaison Manager will deal with inquiries. The two events will be on 12, 13, 14 August and 20 & 21 August respectively. We will post further details on our web-site when we have them.

THE MUSEUM



This powerful exhibition is now on show until 31 March between the Round Pond and the café site. The content was developed by local people and explores the recent

history of activism and protest in LB Ealing including racism, riots and police negligence. It recognises some of the lesser-known people involved in such activism from the 1950s to the 1990s.

The exhibition has been created by an innovative partnership between the Museum, the National Portrait Gallery (NPG) and Ealing Local Studies and Archives. Museum staff say they're very proud to have been involved and to have been able to contribute archive material from the collection to the exhibition.

The project has created a new relationship between the Museum and the NPG, which has donated a print of local band Misty in Roots for the Museum's Leisure Gallery. The NPG has also offered in-kind support for a funding bid recently submitted by the Museum to the Arts Council.

Ealing Rises Up: Film Screening & Talk, 7–9pm 23 March

Asia Ahmed and Narvir Singh's film covers the same themes, with interviews and archive material, and features Eric Huntley and Gurinder Chadha. After the free film showing at the Museum audience members will be able to join in a conversation with some contributors. ***Although tickets have sold out online, Friends can still book by emailing learning@visitgunnersbury.org.***

Women's Football 2022

A special exhibition will mark the 50th anniversary of the Lionesses Team and England will be hosting the UEFA Women's EURO. Gunnersbury Park Museum will be one of the venues later in the year.

THE PARK WINS PRIZES!

We're delighted to report that in the autumn Gunnersbury Park was given the 2021 *Green Flag Award* – look out for the actual flag flying!

When the Park was entered in the *London in Bloom Awards* for the first time in 2020 it won High Silver Gilt.

Chris Ellis, the Park Manager at Gunnersbury, says "We are now delighted to have exceeded this and achieved a Gold for 2021. It's a real credit to the Park & Garden team and volunteers for all their hard work and dedication. Next year we will be entering even more *London in Bloom* categories in the hope of bagging more medals !

I'd also like to thank all the public support we have had over the last couple of years, especially during the pandemic."

FRIENDS' DISCOUNT

Don't forget that Friends can claim 10% off purchases in the Museum shop by showing your membership card. And when shopping online at <https://shop.visitgunnersbury.org/> use the code 'FOGP'.

ONLINE INFORMATION

We try to keep our website at gunnersburyfriends.org up to date with information and comments; it reaches a large audience. As not all of our members are users of the internet this *Newsletter* covers some of the same matters. You can follow and book the activities at Gunnersbury by using visitgunnersbury.org where you can subscribe to their email updates.

NEWSLETTER 117

We will assemble the next *Newsletter* in April. Comments and contributions, images, news and ideas are always welcome. Please send them to The Editor at 25 Hartington Road W4 3TL or email your items 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 We'll send out reminders to members who don't use Standing Orders when renewals are due in April.

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