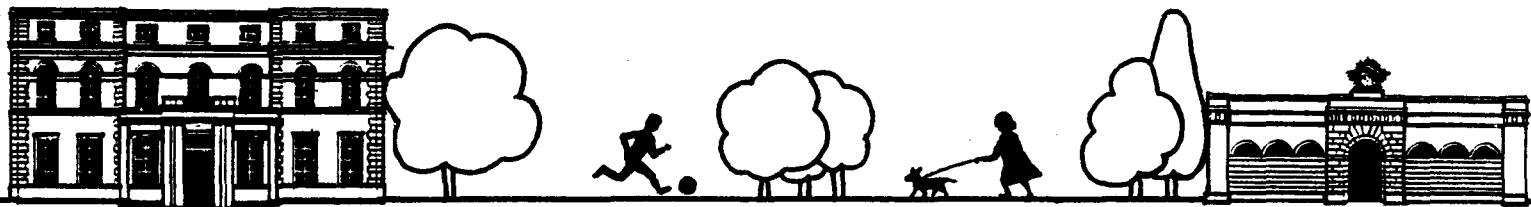


FRIENDS of GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

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NEWSLETTER



Museum Granted £30,000!

Can we see light at the end of the tunnel?

The Museums and Galleries Commission was established in 1930 to advise the government on museum matters. It now has a small "Housing the Museums Fund" for encouraging the improvement of the provincial and the smaller London museums. It has been the ambition of successive curators of Gunnersbury to move the transport collection into the Stables/Coach House buildings. The Commission has now offered the Joint Committee £30,000 for this purpose.

This £30,000 is half the total cost of restoring the Stables and making them fit for their purpose. In order to accept this grant, one of the largest ever offered by the Commission, the Joint Committee has to find the other £30,000. Also, they have to accept the offer by 30th April 1984, the work has to start by 1st July and the project must be paid for and claimed by 8th March 1985.

Can the Joint Committee act with enough speed and determination to achieve this result?

The Joint Committee discussed this offer on 6th April. There are obstacles. The Ealing members had set their budget for the next year (starting 1st April) and could not see how to change it in time. Also, they had refused twice to spend an extra £6,500 on urgent repairs to the buildings, some needed because of vandalism, so they were unwilling to spend any new money on the Park at all. Hounslow, because it would actually be signing the cheques for the work, would therefore exceed its "capital allocation" from central government and would then be penalised for "overspending". Both groups on the Joint Committee would therefore have rejected the offer.

However, the Riding School is prepared to match the grant and enable the project to go ahead. The Museum requires the ground floor of the North Block, some workshop space above and the upper floor of the East Block for display. The Riding School needs accommodation upstairs in the North Block and the stabling available in the East Block. They would also require a bridleway around the Park (distance to be agreed), an infant pony riding area on the disused tennis court and a small paddock. They have asked for a 20-year lease to protect their invest-

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The third Annual General Meeting of the Friends will be held in the Temple in the Park at 3.00 on Sunday, 29th April. The main business of the meeting will be to receive the Reports from the Executive Committee, to elect a Committee for the coming year and to discuss any matters of mutual concern.

The Constitution requires the members of the Executive Committee to stand down and offer themselves for re-election and nomination for this Committee is open to all members of the Society. Written nominations, duly seconded, should be in the hands of the Hon. Secretary, Ken Hawkes, by the beginning of the AGM.

The Temple will be open at 2.30 p.m.; afterwards we will visit the Kitchens to see the progress of the restoration work and examine the enormous new ice-cooled refrigerator! Please try to come along.

ment (the Joint Committee offered Dimsdales, the office developers, a peppercorn lease of 99 years) and for the rent to be agreed before work starts.

The Riding School was not prepared to make this offer to the Joint Committee until the terms of their present agreement had been agreed, which happened on 12th March, and until the Commission had offered the grant. Therefore their proposals will be considered at a special Joint Committee meeting on 24th April (in the Small Mansion at 6pm, open to the public).

How does the future of the Small Mansion fit into this? It has been widely reported that Ken Edwards and Alan Job (the two local men who run the Riding School) believe that the Small Mansion could be operated as a place for conferences, wedding receptions, public meetings, restaurant and display space. They have not made their offer to match the grant conditional upon this use of the Small Mansion (for which separate financial arrangements would be made). There are still derelict buildings, particularly the Orangery, which neither council seems prepared to repair. The Joint Committee has for some years been trying to find private capital to restore the Park and the Friends have reluctantly taken the view that this was the only way forward. The objections to office development were that it was inconsistent with the leisure and recreation purposes of a park and the public would lose the use of the buildings for 99 years. The current proposal for the Small Mansion is the best offer yet which is consistent and it fits all the criteria established by the Joint Committee. The Friends discussed this at their last AGM and agreed in principle to support such a scheme.

As such a combination of favourable circumstances is unlikely to occur again 24th April will be a most important day.

Park Improvements

Friends will have noticed changes and improvements in the Park over the last few months, and the following is a digest of a report submitted to the Joint Committee in April.

The Park lost 14 trees in the gales in February and other trees lost limbs and needed attention. The Bowling Greens have been damaged by the roots of the adjacent poplars. These have been removed and the turf restored; in the autumn more suitable trees will be planted there. The greens have also been improved with a new hedge and two rosebeds. The Horseshoe Pond has also had a lot of work done to it. The undergrowth has been cleared and a few trees removed because they were either dangerous or their roots were interfering with the drainage system. This whole area will be planted in the autumn. There has been a lot of new planting in other parts of the Park. New shrubs have been planted west of the Stables entrance, the 16 rosebeds have been restocked, the area around the Potamac Lake has been replanted with Willow and Dogwood and a new feature has been created opposite the East Lodge and behind the rest garden - this will be planted with shrubs and bulbs which will provide an attraction between October and April. There will also be a new herbaceous border near to the boating pond.

Vandalism

Over the past 18 months the Park has suffered from vandalism. This was discussed by the Joint Committee in December because it was necessary to increase the budget by £13,000 to pay for emergency repair work. L.B.Hounslow was willing to pay their half of this sum but twice L.B.Ealing has declined to provide their half. At the same time the Joint Committee wrote to the Friends asking if we would consider the problem of vandalism and make suggestions. We have agreed to do this.

Do you have any comments or suggestions? This year the Orangery and the East Lodge have been further destroyed, the rest garden has been damaged and parts of Princess Amelia's Bath House have had to be boarded up. Some of the toilets have also been damaged. We appreciate that the number of staff in the Park has been reduced and that the state of the buildings actually encourages vandalism, but it is clear that the Joint Committee will not find the money to solve these two problems. Is anyone familiar with a similar park where vandalism is not a problem and can they explain why? Has anyone seen examples of methods or techniques which keep vandalism down to the minimum and can pass these ideas on? It is often said that children and youths vandalise because they are bored and vandalism can be exciting and fun. Do any of our members know (from close or first-hand

experience?) what the park could offer to potential vandals which would change their attitude and behaviour? Any suggestions, please, by letter (to the Chairman, 25, Hartington Road, W.4.) or at the A.G.M.

The Kitchens

Every weekend since the 14th January a small team of dedicated volunteers has been working in the Kitchens. This year our target was to make ready the large unheated room beyond the main Kitchen for a display of laundry and household equipment. The ceiling has been painted (often), the windows re-glazed, the marble worktop and sink cleaned, the wall tiles replaced, parts of the wall replastered, the floor de-greased and scrubbed (again and again!), the shelves and cupboards have had their paint and creosote surfaces removed to reveal the graining beneath, the brass handles have been polished, the dead mouse removed and all is now ready.

The other major development is the arrival of an enormous wooden food safe from the Rothschild's former house at Tring Park. This object appears to have worked by placing great blocks of ice at the top and removing the melted water from compartments at the bottom. It needs to be restored and re-assembled, but it is as large an attraction (in every sense) as the cooking range!

OPENING: As last year, we will be opening the Kitchens between 2 and 6 on the last weekends of June (23 + 24), July (28 + 29), August (25 + 26) and September (29 + 30). Please come and see what is going on.

Can you volunteer to spend one afternoon stewarding with us? With two rooms open we need a few more stewards; don't be discouraged if you don't know about 19th century cooking, laundry and refrigeration - a smiling face is all we need! Please phone Joan Catterall, 560 4262.

Rothschild Grant & the Board Room

As you will see elsewhere in this Newsletter the Museum will be mounting an exhibition about the Rothschild family. As a result, and through the research necessary to prepare the exhibition the Curator has been in touch with members of the family and learnt that the family has established a Charitable Trust for purposes which were similar to those of the Friends. We therefore informed the Trustees of the range and nature of the projects in which we were involved and they very kindly made us a gift of £200.

In the last year or so the Museum has been able to mount exhibitions in the Board Room but at present it is unsatisfactory for this purpose, requiring improved lighting, electricity supply and wall boards to make it easily useable. The Area Museum Service for S.E. England can make grants for this sort of improvement but that would be only a part of the total cost. We have therefore offered to donate £400 for this purpose on condition that it is used to attract the AMSEE grant.

We are also considering making a donation to the Park. We have often been reminded of the lack of children's playground equipment since so much was removed on safety grounds; another need is for somewhere for parents to sit when supervising their children playing. A recent discovery - some may think it rather surprising - is of local people who have lived nearby for years but, in the absence of a notice beside the main gates, thought it was still a private park! Of course, we don't know how many others are in this position.

The Orangery

The condition of the Orangery is causing us great concern. Since the clearing of the shrubs and undergrowth it is now even more visible and it is not a pretty sight. Doug Stone has formed a small working party with architectural, surveying and engineering skills. The options seem to be a) to halt the decline, b) to restore it or c) to restore it for a purpose.

The Friends have been asked this before, but there is no harm in trying again: The major problem with this building is to find a good use for it that will not expose it to the same treatment as before. If anyone has any ideas, or is willing to help, please phone Doug Stone on 992 4127.

Concert in the Temple

The Friends are sponsoring a concert in the Temple on Sunday 6th May at 3.30: THE ENGLISH TAPESTRY are a 3-part harmony group from Cambridge. They recently performed a programme of old and new songs to people in the Gunnersbury area and were so good they have been invited to return. Also on the programme will be dulcimer solos by Roger Nicholson.

The admission will be £1.50 (children 75p) and entry will be by programme, bookable in advance from the Museum (992 1612) or from Roger Nicholson (993 1143) or from James Wisdom, 25, Hartington Road, W.4. Or pay at the door on the day, but please come early as places are limited.

Friends' Events

"LIFE IN A VICTORIAN KITCHEN" - An 'Entertainment' in the Kitchens as part of Hounslow Council of the Arts Festival. With Victorian Refreshments. Tickets £1, from the Museum or at the door. Sunday 13th May, 2.30 and 4.00. Further details from the Museum (992 1612).

JUMBLE SALE. We have booked St. Faith's Church Hall, Windmill Road, Brentford, for a Jumble Sale on 19th May (2.00) Eva Swann (993 2692) and Joan Catterall (560 4262) are receiving Jumble. Can you give up an evening to deliver leaflets in the week before? Leaflets are the key to success; we aim for over £100!

A TALK IN THE MUSEUM to celebrate the re-opening of the Kitchens. Treve Rosoman on "COUNTRY HOUSE TECHNOLOGY" - the servicing and running of large country houses. 7.30 on 29th June (Friday evening). Everybody welcome; further details from the Museum (992 1612).

FAIRS AND FESTIVALS - our intrepid band of volunteers will be running stalls at events in Brentford, Chiswick, Acton and Ealing throughout the summer - the list of events is a long one. But they always need books, old toys, bric-a-brac and other items to sell. Before you throw it away, remember - Joan Catterall (560 4262) and Eva Swann (993 2692) can turn it into improvements to the Park and Museum!

Finally, make a note in your diary: our THIRD ANNUAL FETE in the Park will be on Saturday, September 1st.

The Museum

The current exhibition (until June 3rd) is "ANTIQUARY TO ARCHAEOLOGIST: RECORDING WEST LONDON'S PAST" and tells the history of local archaeology in our area. The West London Archaeological Field Group will be holding an Open Evening on 8th May at 273A, High Street, Brentford; James Wisdom will give a lecture on 'Thomas Layton, a Brentford Antiquarian' on 16th May at Brentford School for Girls and Jon Cotton will give a lecture on 'Recent Archaeological Work in West London' in the Temple at 3.00 on 20th May. Further details from the Museum.

From July 5 to September 2: THE ROTHSCHILDS AT GUNNERSBURY. This exhibition will reflect the influence of this great banking family, both locally and in London, their social life at Gunnersbury in relation to their other houses and estates, and will illustrate their renowned gardens.

Miscellaneous News

THE NURSERIES in the Park will be open to the public on June 2nd and 3rd, and June 30th and July 1st. Don't miss your chance to buy good stock at good prices - and the money goes straight back into improving the Park.

The NORTH CIRCULAR ROAD INQUIRY. We have written to express our concern that the increase in total traffic flow around the Park will cause extra hazards to people using the Park, either by car or on foot.

Thank you to our members who bought EALING WALKABOUT and brought us a donation of £33 as a result.

Thank you also to Marion and Vincent Booth who were the hosts of a very pleasant musical evening held for the Friends.