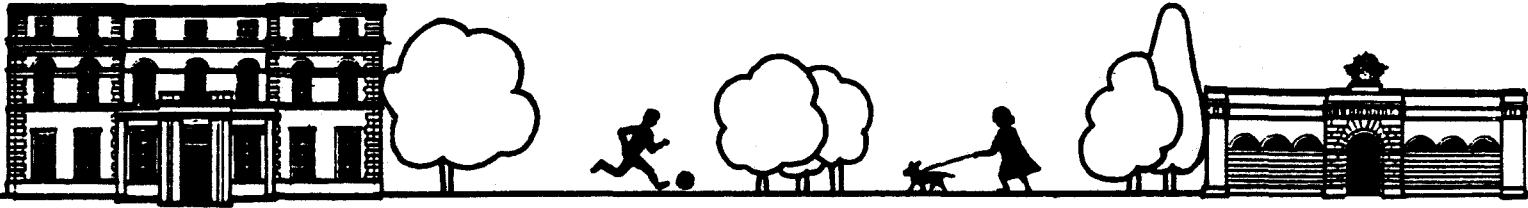


FRIENDS of GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

No. 20
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NEWSLETTER



Christmas Party

This year we are inviting all the Friends of Gunnersbury Park to a Christmas Party in the Museum - on Wednesday 17th December from 7.30 to 9.30. There will be Christmas-type refreshments (wine, mince pies etc) for our delight, and if anyone would like to bring along a 'donation' in that line we would be very grateful. During the evening we will show - for the first time since it was brought into the Museum - a short film made by the Walpole Cinema, Ealing, of the Grand Opening of the Park in 1926! Phil Philo, the Museum Curator, will be preparing a range of mysterious objects on which we can test our powers of identification - with a grand prize for the winner! If anyone has a mysterious and unidentified object at home, now is the time to bring it along, and hear the verdict of the experts. Sorry about the short notice, but as a Society we don't often get the opportunity to meet each other and chat about the changes in the Park - everybody is welcome to come to what we hope will be a very enjoyable evening.

*The current temporary exhibition at the Museum is 'RECENT ACQUISITIONS' until January 4th.

Friends' Gift of Walkie~Talkies

In September the Friends of Gunnersbury Park made a major donation to the Park: three walkie-talkies for the use of the Staff in the Park.

This was the largest single donation we have yet made - approximately £950, raised through jumble sales, bazaars and fetes. It has taken a long time to raise this money, but we are sure the donation is important.

Our major concern was to improve security in the Park - to give the Staff the edge in the long struggle against the vandals. But there are many other uses: to co-ordinate the control of car parking, to summon help following an accident in the play-grounds or on the football pitches, or just to allow the staff who patrol the 180 acres to keep in touch with each other.

John Ward, the Principal Officer in charge of the Parks in the borough of Hounslow, found the money for a fourth set, and the presentation was made to him, to Jonathan McCafferty (the Chairman of the Joint Committee) and to Greg Arthur, John Stockdale's Deputy. You may have seen the photos in the Brentford and Chiswick Times and the Ealing or Acton Gazette.

This note is not only to tell you the news, but also to thank you for keeping Joan Catterall and Eva Swan supplied with the bric-a-brac and jumble which, by the alchemy of volunteer labour, is turned into gold (or in this case, ICOM H2 Radio Transceivers!).

The Stables

The worst news this Newsletter has to report is the collapse of the project to restore the Stables. The bald facts of the case are that Terry Dove and Julia Heath were unable to reach an agreement with the Committee for a 30 year lease on the buildings, and so their licence to occupy the buildings has been revoked.

Is there any point in trying to determine how this happened, and where the responsibility should lie? Probably not. This is the 20th Newsletter I have written and I am weary of tracing yet another path across this old and familiar ground. The Councillors and Council Officers I have talked to are utterly convinced that all fault and blame lies with Terry Dove and Julia Heath. It really is bitterly sad to see these plans, for the income from a riding school to fund the repair of the buildings and to attract grants for an extension for the Museum, collapse yet again, this time, one assumes, for good.

The issue that brought local people together, and from which the Friends was formed, was the proposal to convert the Stables into 'prestige' offices. But we knew that for many years the Stables had been considered as the site to use for the Museum's Transport Collection, to

allow the Museum to expand its Agricultural and Horticultural Collections and to cope with some of the problems of recovering the later, Industrial history of the two Boroughs.

As we wait to hear the Joint Committee's proposals for these buildings, we can hope that they still have a place for these ideas.

Pavilion Cafe

At the risk of going on a bit.....Don't forget that the Friends are trying to improve and develop the catering in the Park, with the hope that the profits can be spent on general improvements. At the moment we are offering two new services.

The first is that we are keeping the Pavilion Cafe (the main building) open every day throughout the winter. So remember, when you want a brisk walk with the promise of a cup of hot chocolate, then Gunnersbury is the place.

The second is that, having decorated the Temple, we are now trying to build up the service of catering for functions there. It is an ideal room for a buffet party for up to 50 or 60 people, or equally for a dinner for 20. It is an 18th century building, a very unusual and delightful building for any sort of social event. Please do your best to publicise this service. Tony Marren can answer any enquiries on 992 0543.

The Park

In September, the Gunnersbury Park Joint Committee received an interesting report about the new planting and changes in the Park. This wasn't picked up by the local papers, so here are the major items.

On the small field south of the Orangery about 200 trees have been planted to make a woodland garden. They should help to mask the noise from Gunnersbury Avenue, and also cut down the wind speed; underneath, in time, a range of woodland plants will be established.

At the south end of the main Children's Playground the earth has been cleared, levelled, seeded with grass, planted with shrubs and roses, and equipped with picnic tables.

Around the bowling greens the edges have been restored, the hedges trimmed, a new dahlia border prepared and a wall has been built to make a raised area for planting. There has been a lot of planting and replanting - around the Boating Lake, along the south edge of the Park (some 2000 bulbs there), the shrubberies in front of the cricket pavilion, near the Small Mansion and north of the Children's Playground, in the Winter Garden and near the Orangery.

Finally the report mentions that the bunkers on the golf course have been re-dug and filled with sand, and, sadly but not surprisingly, some of the new trees and shrubs don't last long. They don't die - they get stolen.

Friends' Activities

New members start here: If you have anything suitable for the 'Fund-Raising Sub-Committee', or if you can offer a little help, please phone Marion Booth on 992 9891 or Joan Catterall on 560 4262. Joan is also the Membership Secretary, 39, Lionel Road, Brentford. Ken Hawkes ('Ken of Brentford') is the Friends' Secretary (568 2717); the Newsletter is edited by the Chairman, James Wisdom, 25, Hartington Road, W.4. (994 4231).

Make a note in your diaries: The afternoon of the first Sunday each month - in the second room in the Pavilion Cafe (the main Park cafe) we will be holding a bric-a-brac and nearly new sale. We are given the most interesting things to sell, and the best will be presented on these occasions. A pleasureable purchasing purpose to your post-prandial perambulations?

(We will start the sales in February - in January you will still be trying to exchange your Christmas presents!)

The good news is the NACRO will soon be starting some restoration work in the Victorian Kitchens; by the summer there could be some very exciting progress.

The Friends' Committee

Stephen Mark has moved to Essex and Mike Rowan has been 'elevated' to a job in the Council which prevents him from serving on the Friends' Committee - so we have two vacancies and we are actively looking for members who would join us on this Committee. We have the power in the Constitution to co-opt members between annual elections. If you want to talk over what is involved (very little, I assure you!) then please phone James Wisdom on 994 4231.

* If this Newsletter arrives with a 'Subscription Reminder' slip, it means our records show that you are one of our faithful, long-term members who unfortunately forgot to renew your subscription on April 1st. Please remember to do this soon, because we cannot continue send out Newsletters on the assumption that you are still a member.