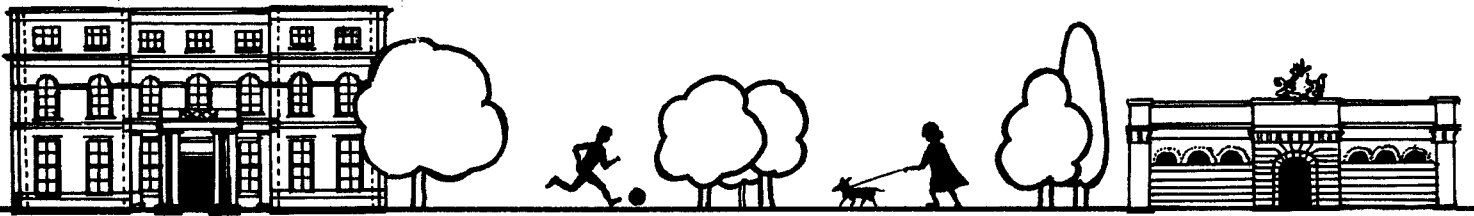


FRIENDS of GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

No. 5
September 1982

NEWSLETTER



OPEN MEETING ~ SUNDAY 19th SEPTEMBER

We have booked the Education Room at Gunnersbury Park Museum for our next Open Meeting, on Sunday 19th September at 3.00. We will be considering how things have gone since the A.G.M. and making plans for the future, so please come along if you can manage it.

The main event this summer was the Fete on July 24th. Joan Catterall and Eva Swan, with the rest of the fund-raising sub-committee, had done a very great deal of preparatory work and on the day everything worked very smoothly. The weather stayed dry, all the stall-holders arrived, the Brentford and Chiswick Round Table brought their Dinosaur Derby and a really professional P.A. system complete with announcer, the Mayors of Ealing and Hounslow came and met everybody, Rampant Brass played beautifully throughout the afternoon and crowds of people came and enjoyed themselves. Until all the bills and donations come in we cannot be sure exactly how much we 'made' on the day, but it is probably in the region of £450. We really are very grateful to everyone who helped us. I think we were all a bit surprised at how much work was involved!

To this we must add the proceeds of a very successful Jumble Sale in St. James' Church Hall, Gunnersbury, on 17th July, and a stall at the Brentford Carnival on the same day; also a stall at the Strawberry Hill Fair on 18th July - £166 in all. We are now considering how best the money can be spent consistent with the Objects of the Friends in the Constitution.

We have two further events coming soon. We will be taking a stall at St. Barnabas Church, Ealing, on 18th September and we will be holding a Jumble Sale at St. Faith's Brentford, probably on 23rd October. For this we need people either to deliver leaflets beforehand, or to donate jumble, or to help on the day. Please phone Joan Catterall, 560 4262.

There were two unclaimed raffle tickets from the Fete - White 237 from our stall (phone Joan Catterall) and Orange 425 from Father Hibbert's stall (St. James' Gunnersbury). Finally I must correct a misunderstanding in Newsletter 4. We have not donated the children's playground equipment; we were telling our members what the Joint Committee intended to provide as replacements.

James Wisdom (Chairman).

Discussions about the Stables

In the last Newsletter we reported that we had been invited to the Civic Centre to discuss the future of the Park's buildings with councillors and council officers on July 22nd.

At that meeting Hounslow's Chief Executive, Roger Jefferies, with Cllr. Spence from Hounslow and Cllr. Hill from Ealing, put the following points to us. They made it clear that they very much wanted to work in co-operation with the Friends in finding solutions to the current problems and avoiding the sort of conflict which occurred last year over the Dimsdale scheme. They said that there was now a new element in the situation as the Teachers' Centre had moved out of

the Small Mansion and it was important to find a use for the space as soon as possible. They made it clear again that the financial situation of both Councils - particularly because of the controls imposed on capital expenditure by central government - made it impossible to foresee the Councils financing the repair and restoration of the buildings, and that they had had no success in the search for grants for the repair of historic buildings. They also recognised that it was necessary to take the problems of all the buildings together rather than deal with them in a piecemeal fashion. In their view the only way forward was to consider the deployment of private capital in the park in some way. What they would like to do^{is} prepare a statement of how the buildings could be used, how much it would cost to restore them and where the money might come from. This could then be considered by the Friends and the public and if agreement was reached the Councils could then move forward.

As a result of the discussions the Friends had had over the schemes for the Stables which were prepared by the students from the North London Polytechnic we were able to reply with the following ideas. We assured the Councils that the controversy last summer was caused by a very real and widespread disapproval and was not created by some artificial campaign. Office development was seen as unsuitable for a public park, which should be the preserve of leisure and recreational pursuits. We also reported that some of our members found unacceptable the idea of cutting off any portion of the park for private use and that it was important to preserve the idea that the facilities in the park were available to the general public. We said that it was impossible to put into any order of priority the reasons why people enjoyed Gunnersbury Park - its great strength was that it was such a rich mixture of historic estate, public park and sports ground. Our constitution enables us to conduct just such a public consultation exercise as the Councils had in mind, and we were prepared to give their new proposals serious consideration and to consult any other local or interested groups which may be affected.

When we receive the Councils' proposals we will publish them in the Newsletter and book the Temple on a Sunday afternoon to discuss them.

The Community Riding School

This summer Mrs. Anne Stead has been running a "Community Riding School" on the derelict land at the east side of the Park. Her idea was to set up a non-profit-making scheme charging very low fees and using volunteer helpers for the three summer months. It has involved an enormous amount of work on her part but she has been completely successful. Many children and some adults have started riding and the land that was a mass of nettles over hills of rubble and earth has been brought into use.

Last year when the idea of starting a riding school was suggested (as a way of using and financing the restoration of the Stables) there were fears of the effects it would have on the rest of the park. Although Anne Stead's scheme has used only 3 ponies it has 'fitted into' the park without difficulty. Young people from the Ealing Community Action Training Scheme helped to erect the chain-link fencing and the London Borough of Hounslow helped with the preparation of the ground, but getting the ponies, the volunteers, the equipment and the food together she did almost singlehanded. She also carried the large financial outlay and we will not know until the scheme comes to an end if her costs have been met.

The agreement with the Joint Committee was for a temporary riding school and the ponies will leave the park on September 26th. Many of the families which have gained such pleasure from both using and helping with the school clearly want it either to be extended or repeated next year. Anne Stead and Janice Ouri who has taken on a lot of the instruction have given so much of their time and energy that their families might have other ideas! There is no doubt that there is a huge local demand for such a facility and in many ways it is the most 'logical' solution to the problem of the Stables. Remember, there are only two more weeks to see this scheme in the flesh and Anne is there all day, every day (except Mondays) if you want to wander down and chat to her about this thoroughly worthwhile undertaking.

MUSEUM NEWS: The Great West Road Exhibition ends on September 12th. From Sept. 4th to October 3rd: Making Maps - The Science Of Cartography. From Sept 19th to October 24th: The West London Craftsmen in the Museum, with demonstrations every Sunday between 3.00 and 5.00 usually in the Temple. Details - phone 992 1612. Also, the Museum needs volunteers to re-paint screens on Monday 13th September.