

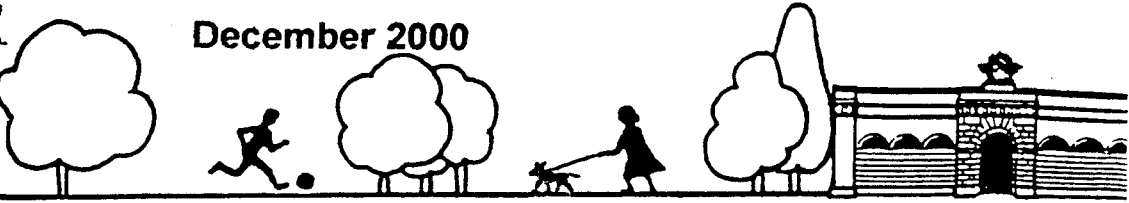
# FRIENDS of GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

# NEWSLETTER

No. 61



December 2000



## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Friends

Welcome to the December Newsletter.

Sue McAlpine is kindly organising a "hands-on" workshop with Roman artefacts for us all at the Museum on 12 January 2001, which is something to look forward to following the Christmas and New Year festivities.

We have included a couple of advertisements in this Newsletter; don't forget that any members are welcome to use this *free* service. We also welcome letters with suggestions regarding the Park and other literary contributions!

Following five and a half enjoyable years of editing the quarterly Newsletter I am sorry to say this is to be last edition, although I shall continue to attend meetings. Thanks to all of you who have sent in suggestions and given feedback during my time as Editor. Finally – *Merry Christmas and A Happy New Year!*  
Ed.

## FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Best wishes for a good Christmas! We look forward to seeing you at event in the museum on 12 January, details on page 2.

We are sad to be losing the services of Helen Poskitt as our Editor. We want to thank her very warmly for producing our Newsletter for more than five years. It has been running since the Friends were set up in 1980; it is important to keep everyone in touch with development in the Park and Museum and we want to see it continue.

I am therefore appealing for your help in finding a new Editor. The work is interesting and involves collecting material for each quarterly edition; the ability to write clearly and word processing skills are needed.

In addition, we have several vacancies on the Committee and would welcome new members – we can co-opt them without waiting for the AGM. This is an interesting time at Gunnersbury, with lottery-funded work going on and a new Curator joining the Museum in January. I would be happy to discuss the work involved with anyone who is interested in taking on these roles. I can be contacted on 020 8994 4231, or by post at 25 Hartington Road, London W4 3TL.

## *Snowdrops*

Four thousand snowdrops have been planted under the trees on the path leading from the Farm buildings to the Potomac. The Park's management would like this snowdrop walk to become a memorial to all those who have enjoyed Gunnersbury in the past. If you wish to support this idea and extend the walk, please help with funding, bulbs or snowdrops from your garden

## CLEANER WANTED

\*\*\*\*\*

For the offices and public areas of Gunnersbury Park Museum on Wednesday mornings (21 hrs.) @ £5.71 per hour.

The applicant must be reliable and happy to work as part of a team. We operate a No-Smoking policy. Please contact the Museum on 020 8992 1612 for application form and details.

## PRINCESS AMELIA'S BATH-HOUSE

For the first time, the layout and structure of the buildings known as Princess Amelia's Bath-house have been thoroughly investigated by archaeological excavation. The early phases of the restoration work (supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund) are nearly finished – when the scaffolding is removed, the building will look stunning. The archaeology has been carried out by CmGs and this is a simple description of their findings, taken from their technical report.

The Bath-House does not appear on the 1777 Parish Map of Ealing, but by the 1780s another map shows a number of ornamental buildings. The scale is not large enough to make it possible to identify the Bath-House, but it is likely from other evidence that it was there by that time.

There seem to be three elements to what was essentially a garden folly. The earliest part consists of a grotto decorated with shells, glass and mineral fragments, with a bathing pool. There is a chamber to the east. The wall between these two rooms is built of a much earlier soft reddish brick, which can also be seen in boundary walls to the south, so it looks as though the old garden wall of the 1660s house was used as a spine against which the Bath-House was constructed. Beside the chamber was the third element, an unenclosed basin, perhaps of slate, which was built against the northern wall.

Gunnersbury Park was divided into building plots for sale separately in 1799 and the two mansions we see today were built to replace the 1660s mansion. Structural evidence suggests that some alterations to the Bath-House were carried out between about 1804 and 1838. When the Small Mansion was sold in 1828 the sale particulars mention in their description of the property “an ornamental dairy in gothic style with a cold bath”, which is probably the same structure. The new owner had a number of buildings in gothic style added to his grounds but no detailed record of works on the Bath-House survives.

The Rothschilds, who already owned the Large Mansion (now the museum), acquired the Small Mansion and its grounds, including the Bath-House, in 1862 and reunited the estate. By the time the first large-scale Ordnance Survey map of the area was published in 1865 most of the present structure was there. The basin to the north had been enclosed in high brick walls, making a small walled garden, and the exterior of these walls, plus that of the bath, had been covered in a cement rendering and gothicised with pinnacles and mouldings.

Though no written record has been found of work here by the Rothschilds, there is evidence of a refurbishment in the 1870s or '80s in the form of glazed wall tiles, decorated in the Japanese style which was fashionable at the time. They have fine blue bamboo leaves on a white background and they are edged with blue-glazed mouldings which resemble bamboo canes. Probably around the same time, the small walled garden was turned into something much more complex. With a small cascade tumbling from a lead pipe at the northern end and disappearing under the floor of the chamber, it had a rough cave-like appearance created with quartz crystals and alabaster fragments, flints, brick slag (possibly a by-product of the Brentford clay industries of the time), an ammonite, and cement stalactites built around metal structures. A projecting vault, which had completely collapsed, added atmosphere to this “cave” or secluded hermitage!

By the time of the 1960s Ordnance Survey map the whole Bath-House was in ruins; since then, the archaeologists believe that the grotto garden was filled in with rubbish from other parts of the park. The restoration has given us a new roof, restored walls and the chamber room is now useable. The next phase will be work on the shell grotto, and then we will restore the wet, ferny grotto on the north side.

## STORM DAMAGE



During recent storms six specimen trees have sadly been lost, and a wall damaged. Other tree branches have snapped off. Every cloud has a silver lining though - it has been decided to leave a dead Poplar lying on the ground (near the Cemetery) to encourage wildlife and for children to play on.

## Good News

The work on the Italian Gardens and the Temple Gardens is forging ahead.

The pool drains under the Temple into the Round Pond. The water bowl is gigantic, and the correct depth in which to grow water lilies. In fact the original water pipe work has been found to be more complicated than first thought. It runs down to the Horseshoe Pond and into the Japanese Gardens rivulets, as it was cleverly planned to drain into the Japanese Garden water systems. Pond water was warmed by water from the nurseries in order to aid the growth of the lilies. Our ancestors obviously knew a thing or two about engineering and gardens!

The brick edges of the Round Pond were found to be breaking and have now been repaired. The nearby seats have been moved to their new, better positions.

A plinth has been discovered, perhaps one of the original plinths for two dog statues, placed each side of the Temple entrance.

## Tree planting and Identification with Lionel Road Primary School

Last Spring Lionel Road Primary School helped with the tree planting in Gunnersbury Park. The children thoroughly enjoyed themselves planting the trees and we thought it would be good to invite them back to the park this autumn to see how their trees had progressed. The children were able to pick out the trees they had planted and were thrilled by how much they had grown. Myself, Michelle and Edd Soones then took them on a park walk and taught them about tree identification. The afternoon was both enjoyable and educational. After this we decided that it would be nice to produce a pamphlet of tree identification with the children providing some of the artwork. The FROGs have kindly offered to fund the production of this pamphlet.

*Marina*

### NEWSLETTER QUARTERLY ISSUES:

- |          |                           |
|----------|---------------------------|
| February | - Spring Lecture details  |
| May      | - Summer Gala details     |
| August   | - September Fete details  |
| December | - Christmas event details |



## GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM EVENTS

*Opening times : April to October 1-5pm (1-6pm week-ends and Bank Holidays).*

*November to March 1-4pm daily. Admission free, donations welcome.*

*Tel/Fax: 020 8 992 1612. Also e-mail: [gp-museum@cip.org.uk](mailto:gp-museum@cip.org.uk)*

### YOUR LOCAL MUSEUM SHOP – Open 1-4pm

#### VIDEOS for SALE

- The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, 1953 and events in the Borough – £10
- Hounslow during World War II – only £7.50!
- 1926 Opening of Gunnersbury Park - £5.00 (*limited number*)
- New Books –Voices of Ealing & Hounslow* by our own Sue McAlpine £9.99

### WORKSHOP FOR THE FRIENDS!

January 12 (6.30 - 8.30pm)

Sue McAlpine is kindly organising a 'hands-on' Workshop with Roman artefacts at the Museum. Tony Rawlins, now a spry 89, began collecting archaeological objects back in the 1930s. Last year he very kindly donated his collection to our Museum, for use as a travelling collection by nine other museums in west London. We look forward to seeing you there.



*Presents unusual  
Presents so nice  
All sold at Gunnersbury  
For a reasonable price*

*Who'll buy sweet candy canes  
To hang on the tree?  
Who'll buy the popgun to thrill  
You and me?  
Who'll buy the Diablo?  
The whistle or flute?  
To welcome Christmas  
With a loud toot?*

*You can if you want to  
At your Museum shop  
So come over to Gunnersbury  
It's just a short hop!*



### PARK WALK & TREE GUIDE

One of the Park Wardens has written details of their own Park walk. The Friends are paying to have the route published so that more people can enjoy exercising in the Park. We are also sponsoring Marina's Children's Tree Guide.

### THE ANNUAL PRESENTATION OF AWARDS AT CAPEL MANOR

Thanks to all those who organised the enjoyable and impressive Awards Ceremony at Gunnersbury this year. The many Course prizes were awarded in the presence of the Mayor of Hounslow and the Guest Speaker was Mr Alan Belcham, President and Chairman of Chiswick Horticultural Society. Capel Manor continues to build on its excellent reputation as a centre of learning.