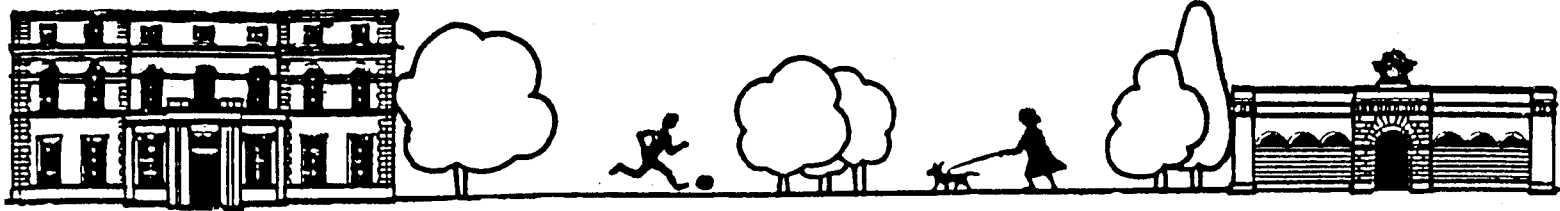


# FRIENDS of GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

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# NEWSLETTER



## EDITOR'S NOTE

In our last issue we thanked Helen Poskitt, the retiring editor, for her work and asked if any member would like to take on her role. Unfortunately, we have not yet found a willing volunteer to do this work so this issue is being put together in a rather ad hoc fashion, to keep you informed. We are sorry that it is appearing a little later than intended – but hope you find it useful and interesting. This newsletter also provides an opportunity for us to welcome Sonya Leydecker, a local resident who came forward after our appeal in the last issue. She has attended two meetings and has now been co-opted onto the committee.

## A NEW CURATOR FOR GUNNERSBURY PARK MUSEUM

Jill Draper, our new Curator, has taken up her post and is beginning to settle in. We took the opportunity - before she gets too busy to stop and talk! – of asking Jill a bit about herself and her hopes for the new job.

Her first experience of museum work came when, as a textiles degree student, she did some voluntary work at the Museum of London one summer holiday. This involved dusting men's suits, which she describes as a less than glamorous task, but the thrill of working with clothing worn by real people so long ago soon had her hooked.

She then did a postgraduate training course in Museum & Gallery Studies before taking up a post with Edinburgh City Museums. She joined them at an exciting time of change and was involved in the re-opening of the Museum of Childhood and the setting up of a new museum based on oral history and community involvement known as The People's Story. She even got to ride on a float in the Edinburgh Festival's cavalcade.

Since then her work has involved staging exhibitions, working with community groups and pursuing her specialist areas of costume and textiles and contemporary crafts. At Luton Museum she worked with a local Pakistani group on an exhibition of current Asian

fashion, Libaas, which included a complementary all-day fashion show. Jill still remembers stapling 100 metres of flame-proof muslin around the edges of a catwalk late one evening and auditioning a host of beautiful models!

More recently, at Abingdon Museum in Oxfordshire, Jill worked with the MG Car Club on an exhibition of MG cars (made in Abingdon) and also with the Oxford Archaeological Unit and Abingdon's historical and archaeological society on a special Millennium Exhibition telling the story of Abingdon as (possibly!) the Oldest Town in Britain.

Jill is very excited by her move to Gunnersbury because she is returning to work nearer to her home; she grew up in the London Borough of Richmond and has past family links with Strand on the Green. She is learning fast about the museum and the services it provides. And she hopes, over the next year or so, to get to know the museum's community and the many local groups with whom it can work, including the Friends.

Jill wants to have a clear idea of the current and potential roles of the museum to provide a base for determining and planning its future direction and development. We wish her well and hope to set up an opportunity for Friends to meet her in the not too distant future.

## OPEN MORNING FOR GPJC MEMBERS and CIP TRUSTEES

Museum and Park staff provided a very useful Saturday morning session for the Ealing and Hounslow councillors who make up the Gunnersbury Park Joint Committee and the trustees of Community Initiative Partnerships (CIP) which manages leisure services for L B Hounslow. A good number turned out, some with other members of their families, on a bitterly cold day. After a session in the museum, where they saw "behind the scenes" and had a chance to experience some of the Museum's educational activities, they were

taken on a short tour of the Park to see recent improvements and to consider the next steps in the Heritage Lottery Fund supported work.

The Friends funded a lunch in the Small Mansion, which enabled those taking part to discuss what they had seen and warm up in comfort! We hope this will become an annual event to ensure that Joint Committee members and CIP trustees get to know both Gunnersbury's achievements and improvements and to see some of the problems its staff teams face.

## FORTHCOMING MUSEUM EVENTS

### Science Day

**Sunday 25 March 2001 1-4pm**

Activities as part of National Science Week including a chance to see *William's Wacky Machines* and to try a new drop-in family workshop called *Animal, Vegetable, Mineral*. Further sessions of the workshop, which has been sponsored by GlaxoSmithKline, will be staged later the year.

### Easter Holiday Workshops

**Monday/Tuesday 9 & 10 April, 10am-4pm**

A two-day creative drama workshop for children aged 9-13 years, providing the chance to improvise your own scenes inspired by real museum objects.

If you wish to join in the fun and take part, please contact Clare, Julia or Kate on 020 8992 2247 to book your place.

### LONDON OPEN HOUSE WEEKEND **A date for your diary, later this year**

This now well-established event will take place on 22-23 September 2001. It provides an opportunity to visit many interesting buildings across Greater London which are not normally accessible to members of the public. This year you will be able to see behind the scenes at the Large Mansion, which houses the museum. There will be a chance to see some of the architecture which is not usually open to visitors. Further details later in the year.

## FRIENDS' NEW YEAR EVENT AT THE MUSEUM

A small group of Friends joined Sue McAlpine, the Museum's education officer, for what is called "a handling session" in museum jargon. This provided a rare opportunity to examine closely some original Roman objects given by Tom Rawlins in memory of his wife, as an educational collection to be shared by nine West London museums.

This was an experiment for Sue, who has only recently taken over responsibility for the collection, but armed with useful background notes from a specialist at the Museum of London, she showed us fascinating things in this little collection.

Imaginatively she used some comparable, more recent objects where it was difficult to understand completely how a damaged or incomplete original worked. The objects we saw included fragments of writing tablets, a padlock, and glass and pottery vessels, all nearly 2000 years old.

This was an extremely enjoyable event and we hope to put on others. On that evening it was suggested that members with collections of their own might be prepared to bring sample objects and talk about them – let us know if you could contribute to such an event!

**ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE – full details of how to pay on last page!**

## MAKING A BEQUEST TO GUNNERSBURY

One of our members wrote recently seeking advice on making a bequest to Gunnersbury. We know that the bigger charities are already soliciting bequests with some success; if our members were able to support the work of the Park and Museum in this way we feel sure it would be very welcome. Our correspondent raised a number of points which may be of interest to other Friends so this short piece sets out some of the issues to consider.

Unless you are going to leave a very substantial sum, needing close management of its investment and the spending of the income it earned, you do not need to establish your own trust. You can offer support in general terms, and ensure that the money is not diverted to other purposes, by making your bequest to the Friends. As a registered charity our constitution sets out our charitable objectives, which aim to enhance and support the Museum and Park and contribute to public education about them.

We could easily accept a bequest for these purposes, so please consider this when making a will. It would be helpful to contact the Chairman or the Hon Treasurer and discuss what you would like to do in advance so that things proceed smoothly when the time comes. As a voluntary group we would find it easier to manage bequests couched in general terms rather than having to comply with lots of detailed conditions! Should you wish your bequest to go to the Park rather than the Museum or vice versa it would be helpful to specify this, however.

If you want to bequeath funding for specific projects it is best to discuss this first with the relevant senior staff. You may have an idea that you feel is easy to achieve but it may have hidden costs which have not occurred to you; for example, your bequest may pay for something which needs a long term maintenance budget which the present Gunnersbury funding could not easily cover.

In addition, both Park and Museum are governed by policies approved by the Joint Committee, including the Park's detailed restoration plan which has been agreed with English Heritage and the Heritage Lottery Fund (which is providing the bulk of the funding), while the Museum has to have a policy for managing its collections as part of the UK Museums Registration Scheme. This means that you need to word your bequest in such a way as to avoid difficulties in implementing it.

However, the policies and the planning of a

programme of restoration work mean that there is always a "shopping list" of projects to which you could contribute. Your bequest could make possible something for which the staff would otherwise have to work very hard to obtain sponsorship or grant-aid.

You may choose instead to leave a sum towards the purchase of objects for the museum collection. This, too, could be managed through the Friends. We have contributed to several museum acquisitions, most recently the Dennis Morris photos which are described elsewhere in this issue. Or you could offer a contribution towards the Museum's own Purchase Fund. (The Public Libraries and Museums Act of 1964 allows a cumulative fund to be established for this purpose, making it possible for even a small museum to "save up" and attract grants for a major purchase if the opportunity arises.)

Gifts and donations to Parks in L B Hounslow are now recorded in a commemorative book which tours the borough and is displayed in libraries and other public buildings. This is a more permanent record than small individual plaques, which are sometimes lost or damaged. Recent discussions have come up with the idea that there should be a specific record of gifts and bequests to Gunnersbury because of its unusual joint ownership by two boroughs.

If you have an object which you would like to bequeath to the museum, it is wise to approach the Curator first. Your object may be beautiful or unusual but may not fit with the acquisitions policy, making it difficult for the museum to accept it. You will find most curators are happy to advise you about other museums which may provide a better home for your bequest, so don't be surprised if this is suggested. It is not ingratitude, but rather a sound professional approach to ensure your gift finds an appropriate home.

If your object would be a welcome addition, then it would be carefully recorded with details of its local connections. Do try to avoid attaching conditions to your bequest as this has caused difficulties in other museums the past. A donor's conditions could actually cause damage to the object. An example would be if you required a watercolour sketch to be on permanent display, when constant exposure to light would cause the pigments to fade and the paper to decay.

So making a bequest is relatively easy, but needs to be planned if it is to be effective and straightforward to implement.

## PARK NEWS

The daffodils are now in bloom, and are well worth going to see. Along the path from the farm dressing rooms towards the Potomac there will eventually be a carpet of snowdrops. We have mentioned this in previous newsletters; to make this work donations of bulbs or funding for the purchase of bulbs are needed. This provides an opportunity for people to remember family or friends who once enjoyed the Park who couldn't necessarily afford to sponsor a seat or a tree. Work on Princess Amelia's Bath-house has continued but has been hampered by the poor weather. Rain and low temperatures have made it impossible to apply the rendering, and as this has to be done next it is holding up later stages of the work.

The border in front of the Bath-house will be thinned out soon, partly to reveal what has been achieved in the restoration and also to aid security. The building is now alarmed and has other security precautions.

The new ironwork and the planting in the Italian Garden have been completed and the repairs to the pool will be undertaken shortly. A resin-bound gravel surface will be laid on the paths once all the construction work is complete. The fragments of the original sundial were found in the pool when the soil and other rubble were excavated – it will be restored in the centre island of the pool, using the original pieces. Restoration of the sundial will be funded by a generous grant from the John and Ruth Howard Charitable Trust.

## PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTION ACQUIRED FOR MUSEUM

The Friends' committee agreed a contribution of £361 towards the purchase of a significant collection of photographs for the Museum. The Heritage Lottery Fund provided most of other funding needed.

The pictures were taken by Dennis Morris, who began photographing people in Southall in the 1970s. Some of his pictures were shown recently at Gunnersbury in the exhibition *Southall – A Home from Home* and have been published by Olympus, in a book of the same title, with a commentary by the Sikh journalist, Satinder Kaur Chohan. All the enlarged prints from the exhibition, plus a further 50 photographs have now been acquired.

These black and white images are intimate, often poignant scenes of Asian families struggling to survive in a new and strange environment and the exhibition has provoked considerable interest from Southall residents.

It is difficult for a relatively small museum service like that based at Gunnersbury, at one end of the very large geographical area of the two London Boroughs it covers, to record and preserve this kind of detail of the lives of its communities. So the photographs fill a gap in the collections, recording home, school, meetings, festivals and weddings, and will be used to create stronger links with the communities whose recent history they record.

## GUNNERSBURY WEB-SITES

If you have access to a computer that will connect you to the world wide web you will enjoy these Gunnersbury websites. The official website is at [www.cip.org.uk](http://www.cip.org.uk) with good photos and details of past, present and future. We have been contacted by the organisers of a new site, [www.GunnersburyPark.com](http://www.GunnersburyPark.com), which they describe as "a little informal thing mainly for dogwalkers"! If you want details of the courses run by Capel Manor at Gunnersbury use [www.capel.ac.uk](http://www.capel.ac.uk). Have fun!

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

**Annual subscriptions run from 1 April so payment is now due if you wish to continue to receive this Newsletter and to support the work of the Friends. The cost is £3 but additional donations are always welcome.**

**• Please make your cheque out to the Friends of Gunnersbury Park & Museum and send to  
The Membership Secretary, 39 Lionel Road,  
Brentford, Middlesex TW8 9QZ.  
Thank you for your support!**

To contact the Newsletter write c/o The Editor, 25 Hartington Road, Chiswick, London W4 3TL.