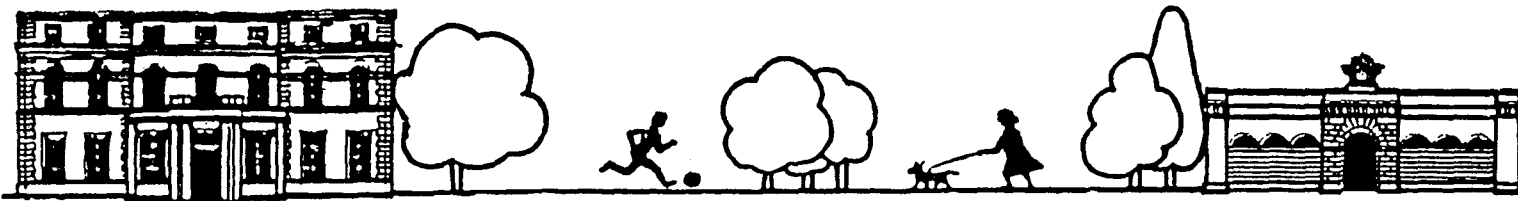


FRIENDS of GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

No 64

September 2001

NEWSLETTER



JAPAN DAY, Saturday, 8 September, 12noon to 6pm.

Don't miss the special Japanese Festival or "Matsuri" at Gunnersbury which is part of Japan 2001. With the support of CIP and the Gunnersbury Park Joint Committee, this event will launch the Japanese garden restoration project with an opportunity to see elements of Japanese culture, such as Japanese archery, flower arranging and gardening, music and food. You will be able to visit a Garden Tent, a Culture Tent and some other small tents, while other activities will take place during the afternoon in the Museum, the Orangery, the Temple, the Terrace Room and the Small Mansion Arts Centre. There will even be a formal Buddhist ground-breaking ceremony at the garden with the Ambassador and Mayors of Ealing and Hounslow at about 1.30pm in the area of the old Japanese Garden, near the Stables on the boundary beside the North Circular Road.

Stewards to help on the day are needed - if you would like to help, please telephone Liam O'Brien on 020 8998 9438 (If you volunteered at the AGM there is no need to do so again).

EDITOR'S NOTE

On 17 July there was an opportunity to celebrate the significant work achieved at Gunnersbury with grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund and other organisations. There was an excellent turnout for this garden party, despite the very heavy summer rain that England is so good at. In fact, almost everyone joined one of two guided tours, led through the downpour by Mike Rowan, Acting Head of Parks and James Wisdom, Chairman of the Friends, with input from the relevant staff at various stopping points, and it proved to be an enjoyable event. Speeches were made by Cllr Julia Clements-Elliott, who currently chairs the Gunnersbury Park Joint Committee, and by Charlotte de Rothschild, whose family once owned the property. Refreshments in the Temple (funded by the Friends) rounded off the afternoon. This was a cleverly planned event making sure that amongst those who were invited were not only representatives of the bodies that had funded the completed projects, but also some who might provide funding for future improvements. In addition, it was good to see that the contractors who had carried out so much of the high quality work, and the CIP staff who had devised and overseen it, were also present. Thanks must go to all who have been involved over the last few years in making real improvements to Gunnersbury.

Since then we have become aware of very great concern amongst the Parks staff because dramatic changes to the staff structure have been announced - you may have seen reports in the local press. The charitable company, Community Initiative Partnerships (CIP), which was set up to run LB Hounslow's leisure services, has a new Chief Executive, John Rice. One of his primary tasks is to resolve CIP's financial difficulties and he is proposing major changes. This is not an unusual situation for an organisation which has been under-funded for some time and which has a new person in charge.

At the time of writing we are still unsure as to how Gunnersbury will be affected, but it appears that a number of existing Parks posts will be abolished and new ones created; many of those currently employed by CIP will have to apply for the new posts and some may end up being made redundant or apparently working at lower rates of pay. Staff will be organised in area teams, rather than dedicated to a specific park, and Gunnersbury will come under a Brentford & Isleworth team. It appears that there will no

longer be any park rangers at Gunnersbury, so the information service operating out of the North Lodge may go and the strength of a dedicated and knowledgeable team on the spot may be lost. All bookings across Leisure Services will be centralised and this will apply to Gunnersbury's historic buildings. From our experience of running the café in the past we know the nightmare of booking Park buildings for functions via people who were simply too far removed to know the details and the problems. This is particularly important when dealing with historic buildings. In both cases there is a danger that management control and responsibility for Gunnersbury could be weakened.

We are concerned that these changes should not undermine the excellent work done after huge fund-raising efforts, that potential improvements – and future lottery grants – should not be jeopardised by a reduction in CIP's capacity to prepare detailed bids, and that the unusual position of Gunnersbury, which is jointly owned by two boroughs and whose museum serves the people of two boroughs, should be fully recognised. Everything is moving very fast, with the aim that the initial proposals be implemented on 1 October and the Joint Committee may have little time to influence the situation. We will try to keep you informed.

Val Bott

THE FRIENDS' COMMITTEE

In recent Newsletters we have been encouraging you to stand for the committee, so it is pleasing to be able to report that this has worked!

At the Annual General Meeting in July four new members were elected to the committee: **Linda Berry, John Brazier, Anne Hobson and Renee Tyack.**

They join these existing committee members, who will continue in office: **Val Bott, Joan Catterall, Gisela Gunston, Sonya Leydecker, Helen Poskitt and James Wisdom.**

At the AGM the Chairman proposed that in future some of the committee meetings should take place at Gunnersbury, probably on a Saturday morning. This, he felt, would enable ordinary members to join more actively in discussions about the Park and Museum and the Friends' involvement in their work. A few other committee meetings may still need to be held during the year to deal with practical business.

Further details in the next Newsletter.

AN AMERICAN STUDENT AT GUNNERSBURY

James Feller has recently completed a ten week internship at the Museum. He has concentrated mostly on research into the relationship between the Rothschilds who lived at Gunnersbury and the people of Acton and Brentford. James, 22, is a final year history student at Brockport University, New York. He came to Gunnersbury to experience history first hand to benefit his education and future career. He quickly fitted into the "staff family" and his colleagues were delighted to read in his placement evaluation that "Gunnersbury, by far, has been the best organisation that I have ever worked for".

THE ROTHSCHILDS IN WEST LONDON

This is a short report by James Feller on the work he was able to do during his internship.

The Rothschilds have been historically very involved in supporting and contributing to the affairs of their local communities. They were recognised people throughout the area as is well demonstrated in many newspaper articles and sources from their time.

As far as community and philanthropic involvement is concerned, they were very committed to both. In the Accounts Current books in the Rothschild archives one may literally find hundreds of entries pertaining to donations to charity and social welfare programmes and organisations.

In looking at 1883-4 alone one finds contributions

to such groups as the Jews Free School (£84), the Jews Deaf and Dumb Home (£20), the Jewish Immigration Society (£170); in total during those two years they contributed £13,000 to charities. One must keep in mind the fact that a pound in 1884 was a much more valuable sum than it is today, so that the seemingly modest amount of £20 would actually be worth £984 today (Bank of England figures, March 2001).

Community involvement was also very important to the family and still is today. For example, in April 1889 Leopold de Rothschild gave a large amount of flowers to the Acton Cottage hospital for its grand opening (*The Press*, 30 April 1889) and in 1920 Lord Rothschild laid the foundation stone for the Ealing Hospital (*County Times & Gazette* 5.6.1920).

As for being recognised within the community, they clearly were. For example, in March 1906 Leopold gave an address at the Rothschild School; the *Chiswick Times* for 30 March 1906 reported that he was very well received and that there seemed to be no doubt as to his importance in the community. On a receipt from a blacksmith by the name of R B Bearman appears the statement that he was

"Patronized by Leopold Rothschild" which suggests to me that the family held almost celebrity status, being used in the same way as athletes and movie stars promoting products today.

The *Acton Gazette* for 1 June 1914 mentions that Leopold liked to be addressed as "Mr Leo" by local people, suggesting a light-hearted nature to complement his charitable activities.

SO SOUTHALL, SO CELEBRATE

This exhibition continues until 13 September. It underlines the Museum's role as a service for the people of two London Boroughs and the importance of being able to display contemporary local life alongside the older historical objects on show there. *Vanda Foster, Deputy Curator, writes:*

The exhibition is one of a group of arts projects involving the Dominion Arts & Cultural Centre in Southall, the Museum and nearly 200 Southall schoolchildren. With the aid of the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Friends, the Museum recently bought a collection of 1970s photographs of Southall taken by a professional photographer, Dennis Morris, featuring portraits and everyday scenes among the Asian community and still on show at the Museum.

In May 2001, in order to provide an updated record of the area, 120 Southall children were given disposable cameras (kindly sponsored by Agfa) and asked to photograph their surroundings and their lives today.

Four schools took part - Villiers High, Featherstone High, Greenford High and the Study Centre (Park Site). Each school was given a catalogue of the Dennis Morris exhibition and a specially recorded talk in which he gave helpful hints to the children on how to take good photographs.

Sixty-seven of the children's photos have been put on display in the Museum, alongside those of Dennis Morris. The pictures show Southall as they know it - colourful shops and supermarkets, stalls piled high with fruit and vegetables, local landmarks, life in the classroom and in the playground.

Some of the children's photographs have already been given to professional artists and performers who are using them in work with the schools to produce mosaics, carnival art, dramatisations and dance performances, all as part of the *So Southall, So Celebrate* project.

These will be on show at Dominion Arts & Cultural Centre, where the exhibition will also be shown, in October.

SECOND SKIN

Another exhibition opened at the Museum this summer and runs until June 2002. *Second Skin* looks at clothing over the last 200 years and explains the impact of new technologies. *Vanda Foster has also written about this show.*

Until the 20th century all clothing was made from natural materials, using animal resources like leather, fur, feathers, wool and silk, or plants such as cotton and linen. The first man-made fibres were invented in the 1880s and used similar ingredients to those for electric light filaments and explosives. Indeed, one of the earliest rayon fabrics on the market was nick-named "mother-in-law silk" as it was highly inflammable!

Since the invention of nylon in the 1950s we have been wearing by-products of the petro-chemical industries - artificial fabrics with chemical names whose properties we do not really understand. Before the introduction of garment care labelling,

for example, many an expensive designer dress was taken to be cleaned only to find that it dissolved in the dry cleaning fluid and the owner was left with nothing but a bucket of sludge. . .

The display shows the range of materials used for clothing, from an iron Civil War helmet to a fibreglass riding hat, from Victorian corsets made of silk and whalebone to throwaway paper knickers from the 1960s, from Lady Curzon's opera cloak, made from silver thread and ostrich feathers to a Hounslow Council manual worker's outfit of bright yellow polyester.

If you want to know where silk and cotton come from, you can see a real silkworm cocoon and a cotton boll.

Children can raid the clothes basket, discover dresses and jackets labelled with their materials - and try them on. Adults can try the Quiz. Could you tell rayon from silk, real snakeskin from fake, ivory from plastic?

Did you pay your subs, due 1 April 2001? Please make sure you have - we need your support

CAPEL MANOR COLLEGE AT GUNNERSBURY

City & Guilds Phase 2 Sports Turf and Green-keeping courses, combining theory and practical experience, are now being introduced by Capel Manor at Gunnersbury. Increased interest locally in grass-based sports, especially golf and cricket, has created a demand for people skilled in the management of high quality turf, not just in the private sector, but also in local authorities, which are managing more fine turf than before.

The college has featured one of its students in its

MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS 2001

Southall – A Home from Home

Dennis Morris' photos of 1970s "Little India".

So Southall: So Celebrate ends 13 September

Photos of Southall life in 2001 by local children.

Window Shopping on now

Shopping in Ealing and Hounslow 1880-1930, with photos and objects from the local history libraries as well as the Museum collections.

Second Skin on now

From silkworms to lycra, an exhibition about the materials our clothes are made from.

Brentham: Pioneer Garden Suburb from Oct

Celebrating the centenary of this Ealing suburb with photos, designs and memories.

publicity for the NVQ2 Nursery Course. Loretta Vince manages the woodland and wild-life garden within Meanwhile Gardens for the Kensington branch of the charity MIND; it offers work experience to 15 students four days a week. The wide-ranging course confirmed that she had found her vocation in life and she delights in passing her skills on to her Meanwhile Gardens students.

The hotline with details of all Capel's courses is 020 8366 4442 ext 120.

EVENTS & ACTIVITIES 2001

Animal, Vegetable, Mineral

Free family workshops, 2.30pm and 3.30pm on the first and last Sundays of the month until the end of 2001 (sponsored by GlaxoSmithKline).

Lace Marathon, Sunday 8 September

See lace-makers in action, 1-5.30pm (This event coincides with the **Japan Day**)

Victorian Kitchens weekends, Apr/Nov 1-6pm

Where the servants kept the Gunnersbury household running smoothly

OPEN HOUSE DAY, 23 September

Join tours of the Large Mansion, and see the restored Bath-House, 1-5pm

Museum opening times: November to March, daily (including Bank Hols) 1-4pm, April to October, weekdays 1-5pm, weekends and Bank Hols 1-6pm ☎ 020 8992 1612 **ADMISSION FREE**

AUTUMN CLASSES AT THE MUSEUM

Two Birkbeck College classes, held on Tuesdays, begin at the Museum on 26 September. Each lasts for two terms, with 20 weekly sessions, and the cost is £98 (£49 concessions). Phone the Museum to put your name down on 020 8992 1612.

The Country House and its Garden will look at the way houses like Gunnersbury's related to their community, how they changed through the 19th century and what impact the growth of London had

upon them. This will run between 10.30 and 12.30.

The Archaeology of Early Mediaeval England will look at the development of England from the Norman Conquest to the thirteenth century, mainly from an archaeological perspective. It will consider themes such as government, fortifications and architecture, monasteries and churches, art and urban and rural settlement. This will run between 2.30 and 4.30pm.

ART CLASSES AT THE SMALL MANSION ARTS CENTRE

Here are details of two new art classes starting in September at the Small Mansion in the Park. There will be a *Life Drawing Class* on Monday mornings, 10-12.30, led by Maureen Adiloglu, from 17 September. Enrolments and further information can be obtained any Monday before the class. Fees are £5 per class, payable in advance per 4 classes. Phone 020 8993 8312

A Sunday morning open painting class is planned for three terms (10-12.30) from 30 September. The tutor is Wynn Jones and the cost is £90 per term. Phone 020 7499 6349. This is suitable for both beginners and more experienced students. Some classes are held out of doors in spring and summer at Gunnersbury and in the last two years there have also been study trips to Italy.

To contact the Editor write to 25 Hartington Road, Chiswick, London W4 3TL
For membership inquiries contact the Membership Secretary at 39 Lionel Rd, Brentford TW8 9Q