

FRIENDS OF GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

No. 69

February 2003

NEWSLETTER

• FRIENDS EVENTS • FRIENDS EVENTS • FRIENDS EVENTS •

Our successful programme of talks continues. Each evening begins with light refreshments from 7.15pm. Please arrive before the talk starts at 7.45pm, as it is not always easy to hear the museum doorbell once the talk is underway.

Tuesday 25 March 2003 7.15-9.30pm in the Museum

ALL THE FUN OF THE FAIR, by Val Bott

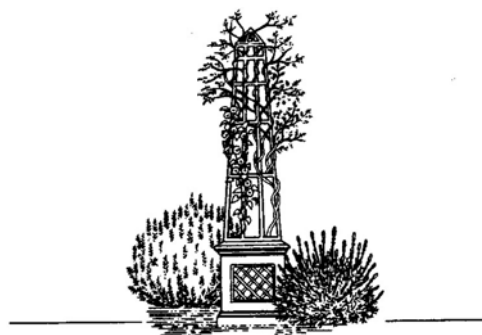
Our speaker worked with the Fairground Heritage Trust in the mid 1990s and will use her experience of their historic collections to show how travelling fairs provided not only excitement and amazement, but also early examples of many of today's entertainments, including the zoo, the art gallery, the strip show and the cinema.



Thursday 15 May 2003 7.15-9.30pm at Capel Manor, Gunnersbury

THE RHS FLOWER SHOWS: from idea to garden by Jason Drewett

Our speaker is one of the Capel Manor staff and has been based at Gunnersbury since the college opened its West London branch there. He will tell us about the history of the Royal Horticultural Society's exhibition gardens and describe the experience of the students and tutors in creating prize-winning gardens at the Chelsea and Hampton Court Flower Shows.



Please note this talk will take place inside the college premises at Gunnersbury, *not at the Museum*. This will provide an opportunity to see the new buildings which will be formally opened in March. Use the entrance from Popes Lane leading to the playing field and car park; access is through the gate in the long brick wall facing the car park area (on your left if coming from Popes Lane.)

Tickets for both events can be purchased in advance at £5.00 each at the Museum, by post (send a cheque to the Friends of Gunnersbury Park & Museum with SAE to 25 Hartington Road, London W4 3TL) or at the door.

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FROM THE EDITOR

This Newsletter appears a few weeks later than planned, for which I must apologise. This slight delay has made it possible to cover proceedings of three GPJC meetings in the shore report below.

It is good to be able to report that our autumn talks were well attended. Elfrida Eden Fallowfield provided a splendid description, from personal experience, of the social whirl of the debutante in the 1950s. Those who came now know how to do a proper curtsy! And Terry Woolliscroft of Twyford Bathrooms had us in fits of laughter with his account of 2000 years of toilets. Do come to the talks in the next few months. They will be fun and ticket sales add to our funds.

Chatting after Terry's talk members of the audience asked for information about visiting Stoke-on-Trent. As a native of the city I can recommend it as an excellent centre for a short break to discover the pottery industry. The tourism information office offers a comprehensive leaflet on museums, factory visits and factory shops (phone 01782 236000). Its website is www.stoke.gov.uk/tourism

Highlights include the Potteries Museum with its internationally important ceramics collection, and the Gladstone Pottery Museum, in an old works, covers the industry. This includes a new Sanitaryware Gallery supported by Twyford Bathrooms.

Several old-established firms, such as Moorcroft, Doulton and Dudson, have small museums.

Spode is the only works still on its 18th century site, with an excellent museum/visitor centre and shops. Book in advance for a factory tour on 01782 744011. The Wedgwood Story, the firm's visitor centre at Barlaston, just out-side the city, is also well worth a visit and has a good café! Throughout Stoke-on-Trent there are many shops selling seconds which offer real bargains!

Val Bott, Newsletter Editor

PROBLEMS IN THE PARK

Since September the golf course hut and the sports changing rooms have been damaged by fire. Over the Christmas holidays a swan was injured when green paint was thrown over its head and beak; the paint was removed at a swan sanctuary and it is recovering. The damage to the changing rooms may mean we lose the last farm-buildings on the estate; if replacement is necessary, we may get something more suitable for modern use. Other parks have suffered from such incidents; recent cuts to the team maintaining local parks cannot have helped - there are now no permanent security staff based at Gunnersbury Park.

The local home beat officer, PC Charlotte Chambers, invites park users to keep her informed (on 020-8247 5989) on issues which concern them; she has already had some success in tackling drug use in the Park. At Chiswick House Grounds a Park Watch scheme has been introduced to combat vandalism and consideration is being given to a similar scheme for Gunnersbury. We will let you know if this becomes a firm proposal

CAPEL MANOR at GUNNERSBURY

Capel Manor College held their annual prize giving in January. The guest speaker was Cllr Michael Elliott, an Ealing councillor, whose responsibilities include Gunnersbury, and a former MEP. As usual the Friends sponsored a prize for the student contributing most to Gunnersbury during their studies

Advance notice: Saturday 15 June 10am-3.30pm. Sale of plants grown by the students, plus advice on Capel courses

GUNNERSBURY PARK JOINT COMMITTEE

The Joint Committee met on 27 September, 6 December and 31 January. Two new working groups - on Events & Income Generation and on Forward Planning & Use of Space - have been created and each includes a Friends observer.

The major issue considered over this period has been the bidding for the future use of the Stables, which is being handled as a matter of commercial confidentiality. We hope to be able to bring you news when discussions have progressed through both Councils' new more complex decision-making processes. One important decision has been to agree to allow the park to be consider as the venue for the London Mela (a multicultural festival derived from the Sanskrit word for a gathering) sponsored by the Greater London Authority. More details of this should be available in March.

Future meetings will be on 14 March and 20 June at 6pm

MORE SEWING NEEDED!

In the last issue we asked for help in making dressing up clothes for schools visiting the Victorian Kitchens. Mary Curran volunteered and made aprons and mob caps. The museum education staff have asked us to record their thanks for Mary's efforts and encourage anyone else who would like to help to get in touch.

If there is a Friend (or even a friend of a Friend!) who would like to make child-sized garments, you can get further details from either Clare Oliphant or Julia Shelley on 020-8992 2247.

100 YEARS OF EALING STUDIOS

September 2002 saw the premiere of the film of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, starring Dame Judi Dench, Rupert Everett and Colin Firth. It marked a historic moment in British film history - the re-launch of the famous Ealing Studios 100 years after they had first started.

When showman Will Barker first started the studios in 1902 the site was orchards. At this period film needed so much light that scenes had to be shot outside in the sunshine; the area was apparently chosen for its clean air and lack of fogs!

To overcome the problems of shooting outdoors, Will Barker built one of the first glass film studios at Ealing, a great technical development. In the 1930s, under the expert management of Basil Dean, the studios were adapted for sound and had some of the first purpose-built sound stages.

Ealing's most famous films were made in the 1940s and '50s, when Michael Balcon was head of production. Many were filmed on location in London; the photo below shows Stanley Holloway and Alec Guinness in the Oscar-winning *Lavender Hill Mob* (1951) at the entrance gates to Gunnersbury Park in Popes Lane.

Over the years a host of stars has worked there, including Gracie Fields, George Formby, Peter Sellers, Audrey Hepburn, Dirk Bogarde, John Mills and Richard Attenborough. But equally important were the many people from Ealing and Hounslow who worked behind the scenes as camera assistants, set dressers or sound supervisors.

One Southall man, an extra in the *Cruel Sea*, vividly remembers filming

in the Studio's famous water tank one cold November night. He was so cold that he picked up one of the Jack Hawkins-style naval duffel coats to wear home. After 50 years he has just given it to the Museum!

The Museum's special exhibition, *Kind Hearts and Comedies* marks the centenary, with film stills, original posters, equipment such as a Mitchell cine camera, and video clips of some of the most famous films. It runs till May 2003.

**Vanda Foster,
Deputy Curator**

*Photo courtesy of
Canal+ Image UK*



LONDON BEFORE LONDON

Local history enthusiasts may enjoy the new prehistoric gallery at the Museum of London. The first museum gallery designed by Conran Associates, it is a simple and elegant space housing some wonderful items. Human remains, pottery and stone and metal tools are shown.

Modern construction and gravel extraction have provided opportunities for excavation, but Victorian collectors were paying workmen for their finds from dredging and construction work on the Thames, especially up river of Vauxhall. These are displayed in the "river wall", tall showcases eerily lit with blue light.

Many come from the collection of Thomas Layton, a Brentford man who ran a substantial barge business beside Kew Bridge during the 19th century, which is now owned by the Museum of London. (A few objects are housed at Gunnersbury and his books, maps and pictures are at Hounslow Library.)

Admission is free, and there is an excellent café!

MEMBERSHIP DETAILS

If you are already a Friend, why not encourage someone else to join? If you are not, do sign up and join our mailing list to receive the Newsletter regularly.

The subscription, at £3, is very modest - but the more members we have the better the income! In addition, a bigger membership gives the group a stronger voice. The Membership Secretary is Joan Catterall, 39 Lionel Road, Brentford, Middlesex TW8 9QZ

Contributions for the Newsletter are welcome. The next issue is due in late April 2003.

**To contact Val Bott, Newsletter Editor, please write to
25 Hartington Road, Chiswick,
London W4 3TL**

The Friends of Gunnersbury Park
and Museum is a
Registered Charity no 286310

MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS

Window Shopping

Local shops in Ealing and Hounslow 1880-1930: photos and objects from local history library and Museum collections.

Let's Party! (just opened)

Glamorous clothes for special occasions from the 19th and 20th centuries - with dressing up clothes for children.

Kumbh Mela and Hindu India until 3 March

Photographs by Peter Spenceley showing images and scenes from the great festival in India

Kind Hearts and Comedies until 6 May The Ealing Studios centenary exhibition, described on page 3.

Landscapes and Landmarks 11 April to 29 September

Paintings from the last two hundred years showing the changing landscape in the boroughs of Ealing and Hounslow.

Shoe 6 June to 7 July

An art and design exhibition with the theme of shoes, introduced by Sue Townsend.

Bigger than Bollywood October

An exhibition of film posters from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, to mark *Black History Month*

The Victorian Kitchens

See behind the scenes in the Large Mansion. The Rothschilds' kitchens are open weekends April -Nov, 1-6pm.

Sunday 6 April Kind Hearts & Comedies

A show adapted from the Questors' Theatre production, based upon memories of the heyday of Ealing Studios. (Further details from the Museum)

THE VIKINGS Tutor: J Scott McCracken

A new 10-week Birkbeck College course at the Museum starts on 2 April; it will run on Wednesdays 2.30-4.30pm. with a break at Easter. The cost is £58 per person (£29 concessions).

To reserve a place phone the museum on ☎ 020-8992 2247 or 8992 1612, or email gp-museum@cip.org.uk

LONDON OPEN HOUSE DAY, 21 September 2003

The servants' quarters in the Large Mansion and Princess Amelia's Bath-house will again open specially for visitors.

MUSEUM OPENING HOURS

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