

NEWSLETTER

From the Editor

This Newsletter contains updates on current issues and details of activities relating to the Park and Museum. These include

- details of our next event
- the new Museum exhibition
- a consultation meeting on the events planned in the Park this summer
- finding an organisation to restore the Stables, and
- the opening of the new Rothschild centre at Capel Manor College.

We also have our usual listing of events with opening times **Val Bott.**

GPJC CONSULTATION ON SUMMER EVENTS

30th April 5pm to 8pm at the Cafe in Gunnersbury Park

Two events are being planned for Gunnersbury this summer, a concert of classical music and the London Mela. The Joint Committee has set up a special consultation meeting which will be led by Nick Green of LB Ealing's Events Team. The meeting will provide an opportunity for members of the public to discuss the plans for these events and ask questions. The officers concerned will be providing a short presentation at 7pm.

GUNNERSBURY PARK JOINT COMMITTEE

The Committee met on 14 March. The main item they considered was the budget for building maintenance in the new financial year. As always the budget is far too little for the work required, but spending of £132,000 was agreed. Work will be done on the Terrace Room, two of the lodges and some of the roofing of the Large Mansion. Damp in the Museum education room and repairs to the boundary wall and the steps to the Bath-House will also be dealt with.

OPENING OF THE NEW ROTHSCHILD CENTRE

The opening of Capel Manor's new building at Gunnersbury took place on 18 March. The august guests included Lord Rothschild (who was Chairman of the Heritage Lottery Fund when Gunnersbury Park won its lottery grant) and the Duchess of Devonshire who has been a patron of the College for some time.

A plaque commemorating the event was unveiled by Lord Rothschild, after whom the new centre has been named; this provides an excellent link with the former Rothschild connections with the Gunnersbury Park estate. Following a buffet lunch the two guests of honour were shown the Victorian kitchens by Jill Draper, manager of the Park and Museum.

FRIENDS EVENT 15 May

We often mention the activities of Capel Manor at Gunnersbury but most Friends will never have seen what goes on behind the high walls surrounding it. Our May talk takes place inside the College premises, not in the Museum, so you will be able to get inside and see the new Rothschild Centre.

For full details see page 4.

CAPEL MANOR COLLEGE at Gunnersbury

ANNUAL PLANT SALE

Saturday 15 June 10am-3.30pm.

This sale of plants grown by the students is a small fund-raising event inside the college's premises.

Advice on forthcoming courses will also be available; use car park entrance.

MORE LOCAL PICTURES

Don't miss the new exhibition of local paintings which Vanda Foster describes on the right.

In addition, here are details of two other exhibitions of local pictures from LB Hounslow's local studies collection, many of which are rarely shown. At Kew Bridge Steam Museum until 29 June you can see *BRENTFORD: Charting Change*, which also marks the 100th anniversary of today's Kew Bridge. Then between 24 May and 26 October, Hogarth's House will show *CHISWICK'S PICTURES: 250 years of prints, drawings, watercolours and paintings*, an exhibition put on by Brentford & Chiswick Local History Society.

CHARLOTTE & LIONEL: A Rothschild Love Story

by Stanley Weintraub
Simon & Schuster, £17.99
ISBN 0-7432-1991-0

This new book provides an account of a remarkably successful arranged marriage between two Rothschild cousins, based on letters and diaries in the Rothschild Archive. It also looks at what it was like to be rich and famous in the 19th century!

Charlotte was one of the grand chatelaines of Victorian England and Lionel became the country's leading financier and the first of his faith to take a seat in Parliament. The book makes clear the Rothschilds' place in politics and society and, in turn, shows how important Gunnersbury was to the family and their circle.

FAIRGROUND HISTORY

Val Bott's entertaining talk in March described the way the traditional fair evolved from a trading event to one which provided a package of travelling entertainments. Rides, shows and stalls developed as improved roads and the new steam engines made transporting bigger structures possible, while the ingenuity of the showmen provided ever greater "wonders" for their audiences.

LANDSCAPES & LANDMARKS:

paintings of local scenes, at the Museum, 11 April to September 29

As you sit in a traffic queue at Hanger Lane or on the M4 it may be hard to imagine that Acton was once famous for its oak trees and Heston for its rolling fields of wheat. The Museum's new exhibition of paintings and prints made over the last two hundred years shows how much the landscape has changed. These paintings and prints are just a sample from the museum's large collections

Some local landmarks have completely disappeared: the Market House at Brentford, the old house at Hanworth Park, the toll gate at Neal's Corner in Hounslow, the playground of Great Ealing School and the original tower of St Mary's Church, Steyne Mills, a wonderful Victorian building in Acton, which was to become the Empire Laundry and then the Co-op jam factory, before being demolished in the 1960s.

Other pictures show familiar scenes, but looking very different. In 1837 the Wharncliffe Viaduct in Hanwell was brand new, a magnificent example of Brunel's engineering and the first viaduct on the Great Western Railway. In 1900 the Argyle Road in Ealing was barely more than a path through fields which stretched all the way to Harrow. In the 1970s the docks at Old Brentford were still thronged with cranes and ships serving thriving local industries.

Visitors are invited to bring in their own photographs of the same scenes as they are today. These can be copied and put on display beside the paintings to demonstrate the changes that have taken place.

Vanda Foster, Deputy Curator



The Thames at Chiswick, John Varley, early 19th century

THE GUNNERSBURY PARK STABLES

We reported in an earlier Newsletter that the Gunnersbury Park Joint Committee had agreed upon their "preferred bidder" for the restoration and development of the stables. We can now report that their recommendation has been approved by Hounslow's Executive and Ealing's Cabinet.

However, a formal agreement with that bidder has to be set up before a formal announcement can be made. And a steering group will be established to oversee the project for the two local authorities. The matter remains subject to commercial confidentiality.

The process of developing a scheme for the future will take time and a lot of work. The bidder not only has to meet English Heritage's requirements for these listed buildings but must also obtain the necessary consents on planning and transport issues. We have to be patient and recognise that it could prove impossible to find an appropriate solution that fulfills all the official requirements as well as meeting the bidder's needs. Fingers crossed!

LONDON OPEN HOUSE DAY, 21 September 2003

The servants' quarters in the Large Mansion and Princess Amelia's Bath-house will again be open specially on this day.

Contributions for the Newsletter are welcome. Next issue out late June 2003. To contact Val Bott, Editor, write to 25 Hartington Rd, London W4 3TL.

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!

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

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.

Making a Victorian Corset, 2 day course, 5/6 July

Look at original corsets from the museum collections and receive tuition from a professional stay-maker in cutting, constructing and boning a Victorian corset. Ideal for fashion students, drama societies and dressmakers. £50 for 2 days 10am - 4pm Limited places - book with Vanda Foster on 020 8992 1612

MUSEUM OPENING HOURS

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

MEMBERSHIP DETAILS

Subscriptions for 2003-4 are now due. A renewal form is enclosed with this Newsletter.

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.

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

FRIENDS OF GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

EVENING TALK

The RHS Flower Shows: from idea to garden

an illustrated talk by Jason Drewett

**A history of Royal Horticultural Society show gardens,
plus the recent experience of Capel Manor students
and staff whose gardens have won RHS awards**

15 MAY 2003

7.15pm

**at The Rothschild Centre,
Capel Manor College, Gunnersbury,
entrance via Popes Lane car park**

**Tickets to include refreshments, can be purchased
in advance at £5.00 each.**

**Please send your cheque, made out to the *Friends of Gunnersbury
Park & Museum*, with an SAE to
25 Hartington Rd, London W4 3TL
or buy tickets in person at
Gunnersbury Park Museum, Popes Lane, W3.
020 8992 1612
or pay at the entrance**