

NEWSLETTER

FROM THE EDITOR

The last few months have been busy – and there is good news and bad news to report. The Bulb Walks organised by Capel Manor at Gunnersbury were hugely successful, with a real crowd turning up for the first one and even more for the second. Our thanks to Capel Manor staff for providing something which was so obviously what park users wanted and we hope they'll do more events like this.

The talk on the history of lace was tremendous, with the chance to examine exquisite lace at close quarters and to feel how very heavy lace made from silver thread is, underlining the fact that it was for the leisured classes. The small group who came had an enjoyable time with the personal attention of a real expert, but we think people were put off by the dreadful hailstorm earlier that evening! More Lace Guild events are coming - don't miss them.

We have also included a lot of details of other history-related events in the area during the next few weeks as we suspect that people who are interested in the local museum are likely to be enthusiasts for the history of the area!

GUNNERSBURY PARK JOINT COMMITTEE

The Committee met on 19 March. In addition to the business meeting they heard a presentation from the owner of the Syon Park Butterfly House setting out his proposal for relocating it to the site of the disused bowling green by the car park at Gunnersbury. It was favourably regarded and will be considered in more detail at a future meeting.

The committee received the usual report on recent activities in the Park and Museum. It considered and approved plans for a Summer Classical Concert and the 2nd London Mela at Gunnersbury – details are provided elsewhere in the Newsletter. The Mela earns a fee of £5,000 for the Gunnersbury budget. They also agreed to the use of the Park for a Sikh Heritage event on 28 August.

However, the discussion over the budget revealed a dreadful muddle. Although the financial year 2003-4 was nearly over, a decision made by Ealing Council in 2003 to take £30,000 out of the budget (£60,000 when matched by Hounslow Council) had not been implemented. It had been possible to reduce this to £44,000, and it was agreed that there was no alternative but to take it from the £60,000 that had been set aside for use as partnership funding to a successful lottery bid. Ealing GPJC members indicated that they had intended it to be taken from the park not the museum, but were told it was too late to direct the operational budget to this extent.

The proposed contribution for 2004-5 from the two councils totals £797,800. However, Ealing Council will cut its contribution by £77,500 and this will be matched by Hounslow. The total cut is therefore £155,000 and we don't know yet how this will be implemented. This underlines not only poor financial management but also the inadequacy of the joint arrangements for Gunnersbury.

The next meeting of GPJC will be on 18 June at 6.30pm at Gunnersbury.

DOING UP THE TOILETS

No, it does not sound very glamorous, but in March the Friends put in a bid to the Brentford Area Committee for funding to improve the toilets nearest to the museum. We are delighted to report the award of a grant of £16,000 towards this absolutely essential work which will be done over the next few months. Our thanks go to Hounslow Council for recognizing that the toilets are an important part of a good quality experience for groups coming to the Museum.

GUNNERSBURY

The Lace Guild has a good programme to accompany its exhibition. Closing date for tickets is 2 weeks in advance of each event. There is a leaflet at the museum or details are on the Guild's web-site www.laceguild.org.

22 June **Four Centuries of Lace**, a talk by Gwynedd Roberts with samples from her own collection 6-9pm. Tickets for the talk, with refreshments, are £6 for LG members, £8 non-members

Sessions in the Park café

13 June

Lace Identification

Workshop, guided study of lace on types and making techniques, led by Gwynedd Roberts. (Another *Lace Identification Workshop* by Ann Day takes place 4 Sept) 1-5pm, tickets £8 LG members, £10 non-members.

24-25 July

Carrickmacross Lace

Workshop (2 days), a chance to learn to make one of the Irish needle-laces, led by Joan Merrifield, 1-5pm for beginners and experienced makers. £16.50 for LG members, £19 non-members.

21 & 22 Aug

Children's Lace Workshops

(2 events, age 7 and over) 1-5pm, cost £3 for materials only, making a bobbin lace flower for a greetings card.

18-19 Sept

Armenian Lace Work-shop

(2 days) Making a knotted needle-lace, with Pat Trott. Details as 24/25 July.

The Brentford & Chiswick Local History Society and the Hounslow Heritage Guides have organised a programme of talks for Local History Month. These take place at St Paul's Church Centre, St Paul's Road, Brentford and start at 1.30pm. Good quality lunches at reasonable prices are available in the award-winning café at the Centre from 12 noon onwards, so you can have lunch there first and make an outing of it!

11 May *St Mary's Convent, The Butts* by Paul Shaw, convent archivist

18 May *From Ferry to Bridge: Brentford and Kew ferries and Kew Bridge* by Andrea Cameron

20 May *Historic Houses of Hounslow* by Christine Diwell

25 May *Fred Turner and the early years of Brentford Library* by Carolyn Hammond

27 May *Some Boston Manor Connections* by Janet McNamara

Donations of £2 are requested for the talks towards the Open House Project at St Paul's. Queries to Janet 020 8560 3718

GREEN ROUTES IN HOUNSLOW

A new free publication, issued by CIP and supported by the Hounslow NHS Primary Care Trust, is designed to encourage us to walk more! A set of A5 cards in a folder, each card is well designed in full colour, describing a specific place to visit with a map based on aerial photographs on the back. The walks cover Bedfont Lakes Country Park, Chiswick Cemetery and Dukes Meadows Promenade, Chiswick House Grounds, Hounslow Heath Nature Reserve, Lampton Park and Gunnersbury Park. The packs are free from the Museum and from Hounslow Libraries and other CIP premises.

A FOOTBALL SOUVENIR OF 1914

The Museum has purchased for its collection a copy of *The Brentford Football Club Official Handbook 1913-14* which was auctioned to raise funds for Brentford Football Club. It will be included in the exhibition later this year. With information about fixtures, the team colours (then blue and gold), the rapidly growing Supporters Club, photos of the players and details of the grounds-men, as well as wider local information, this is a useful acquisition. The *Handbook* includes details of local transport links to Griffin Park, from motor-bus to Great Western Railway, and adverts for local businesses like Fuller Smith and Turner, whose "unrivalled Chiswick Ales" could be supplied to families "direct from the Brewery". The Friends will be helping to cover the cost of this interesting acquisition.

LONDON MELA

Plans for the second London Mela at Gunnersbury Park were launched at City Hall. Sponsored by the GLA, this free event takes place from noon to 8pm on Sunday 15 August.

There will be live performances of contemporary and classical Asian music, with children's activities, cabaret, street theatre, a fun-fair and a range of food stalls. The Ealing Council staff involved have learnt from the experience of the 2003 Mela and promise a great event. Do come along!

THE MUSEUM AND LIBRARY CLUB

Between September 2003 and May 2004 Gunnersbury Park Museum, Hounslow Libraries, and Hounslow Adult Education have been working together on a project funded by the Department for Education and Skills in conjunction with the London Libraries Development Agency. The aim has been to improve Basic Skills and Skills for Life provision in London for excluded adult communities.

Visits were arranged for young adults from Feltham Community College all of whom are taking part in a programme known as JUMPSTART. They went to Hounslow Central Library, Gunnersbury Park Museum, the Science Museum, and the Museum of London. The students were working towards greater literacy skills, improved general knowledge and knowledge of their local environment now and in the past.

They were enrolled at the library and given detailed tours by library staff in small, relaxed groups. They were amazed to discover CDs and computers as well as books. At Gunnersbury they took part in a Murder Mystery in the Victorian kitchens and were given the chance to handle real Victorian objects ranging from fans, hats and fox furs to truncheons and handcuffs, very popular activities which inspired conversation about Victorian history.

Their visits to central London Museums involved new experiences for most of the students who had not travelled into central London before. They were treated as VIPS and had special free entrance to activities as well as pizza for lunch!

The tutors reported greater confidence in the young people, a greater interest in work experience and much better communication skills. They have made requests for local history walks and more choice of books in the libraries.

A display of photographs from the project will be displayed during Adult Learners' Week at Hounslow Central Library (beginning Saturday 15 May). It will then go to Feltham Community College and finally to Gunnersbury. The partners are now seeking funding to develop the project to include archive and local history resource materials to use at the museum and as outreach to the colleges.

Julia Shelley

SUMMER CLASSICAL CONCERT IN THE PARK

Following the success of last year's concert, another similar event is being planned for Saturday 10 July. Once again, it is being organized by Ealing Council's events staff and it will be sponsored by Waitrose and GlaxoSmithKline. It may be possible to put on a second concert the following night but details are not yet available.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Marilyn Buekett writes: Since receiving the last Newsletter I visited the Park and saw the remodelled steps down the terrace beside the Bath-House. I was very disappointed as I do not think they complement or bear any relation to the Bath-House. Until now the renovations and improvements in the Park (Italian Garden, new seating near the pool, children's play area) have all been sensitively developed and appropriate to their surroundings. I sincerely hope this is not the beginning of a series of ill-fitting works in the Park.

THANK YOU . . .

The Education Department at the Museum would like to thank the Friends for funding the creation of new replica costumes for the children who visit. They have been able to make new outfits for staff who play characters in the Kitchens and in the *Above Stairs* sessions. Julia Shelley writes "Joan Catterall (Friends' membership secretary) has worked tirelessly to source the material and we are very grateful for her support".

HOGARTH'S HOUSE CENTENARY

Gunnersbury Park staff keep an eye on the collections at Hogarth's House, which is also run by CIP.

The House opened as a museum on 1 June 1904 and the William Hogarth Trust is hiring a marquee for the garden for the centenary celebrations, funded by an *Awards for All* lottery grant.

The **centenary exhibition** will run from 29 May throughout the summer. It will cover the attempts to rescue the House in the 1890s and its purchase in 1901 by Lieut-Col R W Shipway, who restored and opened it to the public, giving it to Middlesex County Council in 1910, as well as showing what the growing suburb of Chiswick was like at that period. Admission to the House and exhibition is free.

On 29 May James Wisdom will give the **Centenary Lecture** on the life and work of Hogarth, but for adults only! This will take place in the marquee, doors open 7.30, lecture starts at 8pm. Tickets are £5.00 from Pot Pourri, florists in Chiswick High Road or by post (send your cheque made out to The William Hogarth Trust to 8 Heathfield Gardens, W4 4JY.)

For adults and children, there will also be history quizzes in the House and free art activities in the marquee 2-5pm on 29 and 30 May.

75 YEARS OF QUESTORS

Ealing's amateur theatre club, the Questors, formed in 1929, found permanent premises in 1933 in an old iron church in Mattock Lane. This made way for a purpose-built theatre in 1963, since extended to provide 2 stages, and Questors is now the largest amateur theatre club in Europe.

Over the years, high profile theatre professionals have been associated with the club. Dame Judi Dench is the current patron; other associates have included Amanda Redman and the late Sir Michael Redgrave.

The club has always been a breeding ground for new talent, in acting, designing and writing. The Tom Stoppard play, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, began life as a one-act play at a Questors New Plays reading.

To celebrate their 75th year, Questors have put on an exhibition with photos and programmes from early productions, letters from theatre greats like J.B. Priestley, Sybil Thorndike, Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter. Original designs and set models from productions such as *The Snow Queen*, costumes from *The Snow Queen* and *Hedda Gabler* show how the plays are staged and you can walk through a piece of theatre set that to see how it is constructed.

MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS

On show now:

Lace at Gunnersbury (until September 26)

Highlights from the Lace Guild collections, with costume from the museum's own collection

Behind the Scenes at the Theatre (April 5 – August 15)

75 years of the Questors Theatre in Ealing.

Bread Street (April 9 – August 15)

London Food Link commissioned Sara Hannant to photograph bakers both at home and in commercial bakeries, between December 2003 and February 2004. The resulting exhibition, first shown at City Hall, shows cholla at Grodzinski's, piles of whole-meal loaves at the Celtic Baker in Spitalfields, gold and purple bags of Elephant Atta flour in a Southall shop and capture the huge variety of bread traditions amongst different cultures in the capital

Forthcoming exhibitions:

Brentford Football Club (Sept 7 – March 2005)

100 years of football at Griffin Park – the Museum is seeking photos and souvenirs as gifts or on loan, together with memories and stories to support this exhibition.

Celebrating Poland (Oct 15 – Jan 30 2005)

on Polish people in West London and Poland's accession to the European Union

MUSEUM OPENING HOURS

November to March, open daily including Bank Hols 1– 4 pm, April to October, weekdays 1– 5pm, weekends & Bank Holidays, 1– 6pm. Phone: 020 8992 1612 **ADMISSION IS FREE**

The Victorian Kitchens

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

11 September is National Lace-Making Day

The Lace Guild will be organizing lace-making sessions all over Gunnersbury Park!

SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE DUE - PLEASE RENEW PROMPTLY USING ENCLOSED FORM!

Letters and contributions to the Newsletter are welcome.

NEXT ISSUE JULY 2004

To contact Val Bott, the Hon Editor, write to 25 Hartington Rd, London W4 3TL or email ValBott@museums.freeserve.co.uk

MEMBERSHIP DETAILS

If you are already a Friend, please 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 and the stronger our voice. Subscription forms are available in the Museum or simply send your cheque with your name and address to the Membership Secretary, Joan Catterall, by post at 39 Lionel Road, Brentford, Middlesex TW8 9QZ.

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