

THE LONDON MELA 15 AUGUST 2004

The London Mela is a family-friendly festival featuring hundreds of performers from around the UK and across the world. Last year the event attracted over 55,000 visitors. This second London Mela is again produced by Ealing Council, hosted jointly with Hounslow Council and supported by The Mayor of London.

As the broadest celebration of Asian music and culture outside the Indian sub-continent, it aims to attract a wide audience of both local people and others from the whole of London, whether they have Asian roots or not. The colour, the scale and the sounds of the Mela make this a very rich mixture of music, dance, art and entertainment. It uses multiple stages, tented venues and performance spaces showcasing everything from mainstream pop to classical music, from cutting edge urban grooves to exciting fusions of eastern and western musical genres. There will also be heritage attractions, modern and traditional dance performances, children's and sports activities, traditional craft stalls, a huge funfair and a spectacular carnival-style finale.

Admission is free and the gates to the Mela site within the Park open at 12 noon and close at 8.30pm. Free stewarded parking is provided in the Park. Highlights include:

- BBC Radio 1's Bobby Friction and Nihal hosting the *London Flavas* stage
- international artists flying in from London's sister city Delhi and from Dacca
- a Lahore/Mumbai classical music collaboration featuring Haider, Hanif and Mehboob
- In The Dhol Drums – a new theatre piece specially commissioned for the London Mela moving throughout the 30-acre site
- Din Shuru, a procession of tremendous colour and movement, celebrating the Indian influence on Caribbean carnival and brings the Mela to a spectacular conclusion.

Through the commissioning of new performances, support for British-based emerging artists and the promotion of traditional and classical art forms to a wider audience, the London Mela is re-inventing Mela outside South Asia.

- "*Mela*" is a Sanskrit word meaning "gathering", which originated on the Indian subcontinent and describes all sorts of community events and festivals.

OPEN HOUSE DAY 19 September

Once again some of the Gunnersbury Park will be are opened up to visitors as part of this special event.. Budget cuts mean that there is no funding for extra staffing on these days at Gunnersbury but with the help of volunteers the aim is to open Princess Amelia's Grotto and the Temple between 1pm and 5pm.

If you would like to help with this event please let us know on 020 8994 4231 or email the Editor (see back page). We will provide a training session in advance on the historical background, and information sheets have already been prepared for visitors. You need to have the stamina to be on your feet for much of the afternoon and the confidence to manage the visitors - for example, if it gets overcrowded!

In addition Merfyn Edwards, one of the tutors who runs classes at the Small Mansion Arts Centre, will be putting on an exhibition of paintings by his students from 1pm. You may even be inspired to join a class or buy a picture!

TWO LOTTERY GRANTS

The Museum has been awarded a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant to develop its collections and services to the South Asian community in the London Boroughs of Hounslow and Ealing.

The grant will fund a new fixed-term contract post of Community Outreach Officer which has been advertised this month. We look forward to welcoming the new worker and offering support for this important project.

In addition, the Thomas Layton Trust has also been awarded an HLF grant. Thomas Layton (1819-1911), a prominent local politician, ran a lightering and coal business on the Thames. A small part of his huge collection of archaeological objects, found in dredging or building work on the river, is at Gunnersbury, though most of this collection is in the Museum of London. His library and his collections of maps and prints are managed by Hounslow Libraries.

The grant will fund a community historian to encourage use of the collection and raise interest in Brentford's history at this time of enormous change in the town.

A CHAMOMILE LAWN

Joan Catterall has written to tell us about some new planting in the Park. "Lawn" was her word, but it may give the impression of something rather larger than this really is!

Joan grew the chamomile from seed and it was planted out with the help of Tony Keaveney, of the Parks staff, and Marcus, who was on a job experience placement before he starts at Capel Manor College at Gunnersbury in September.

Where is it? The new "lawn" is at the centre of the pool in the Italian Garden behind the Temple!

THE ENGLISH HERITAGE "BUILDINGS AT RISK" REGISTER, 2004

English Heritage publishes this list every year to provide information on all Grade I and II* listed buildings and scheduled ancient monuments (structures rather than earthworks), known to be at risk through neglect and decay, or vulnerable to becoming so. Grade II listed buildings at risk are also included for London only.

Most of the buildings and structures listed are in poor to very bad condition; a few in fair condition are also included, usually because they've become functionally redundant, making their future uncertain. Full details of this year's list are at www.english-heritage.org.uk.

This year a number of entries have been removed as their future has been secured and the total number of buildings on the list is now smaller. The aim has been to get work started on these vulnerable buildings to prevent the cost of repair escalating to the point where it is no longer economic. Nearly 90% of buildings on the Register are likely to require some subsidy to bring them back into use and the average amount needed for each structure has increased in real terms.

Nine of the 21 structures listed within L B Hounslow are in Gunnersbury Park. They are described as follows:

- Archway near east lodge, Gunnersbury Avenue, grade II, very bad
- Boundary wall from 17th century estate, grade II, fair
- East Lodge, Gunnersbury Avenue, grade II, very bad
- East Stables, grade II*, very bad
- Gothic boathouse (Potomac Lake), grade II, very bad
- Gothic ruins, grade II, fair
- Large Mansion, grade II*, fair
- Small Mansion, grade II, poor
- West stables, grade II, very bad.

The Friends came into being in 1980 because the proposed future for the West Stables was as part of an office development. In that time we have provided a wealth of ideas for the use of the buildings and contributed to the plans which underpinned the successful HLF bid which brought funds into the Park in the 1990s. Work was done on Princess Amelia's Bath-House and Grotto and this is no longer on the list – but it remains unfinished. In the last year the Temple has been vandalised and much of the Farm Changing Rooms destroyed by fire. In fact, the list under-estimates the scale of our problems.

The significance of the Gunnersbury structures on this list cannot be denied, nor is there any doubt that they are in desperate need of refurbishment. None of this is worth doing without a long term plan for their use and maintenance, however; indeed, such a plan is a requirement of the Heritage Lottery Fund which is the most likely source of financial support. And HLF was not set up simply to deal with neglect by local authorities.

At the June GPJC meeting the building maintenance budget was cut by £25,000 and it was also revealed that preparation of the conservation plan depends upon raising up to £70,000. The aim is to submit a bid to HLF for up to £50,000, probably in August with the aim of getting a decision by December. If successful, specialist consultants could be commissioned early in 2005. A further £20,000 still has to be found but cuts to the budget may make this difficult.

GUNNERSBURY PARK JOINT COMMITTEE

The Joint Committee met on 18 June and Cllr Corinna Smart was elected to the Chair. *James Wisdom has provided the following report:*

Ealing Council cut their contribution last year (2003-4) by £30,000, so Hounslow followed suit. Despite making some savings and taking more in fees and charges, the Joint Committee had still to find the last £20,000 of the £60,000, which they did by raiding their contingency fund for matching Lottery money and by accepting £10,000 from CIP.

This year Ealing is cutting its contribution by £77,500, and Hounslow is following suit, so (with a minor adjustment from last year's money) they now have to find savings of £142,200. Last year's actual expenditure was £546,527, so this means they are proposing to cut a quarter of the budget. This is as bad as it gets. Various cuts were suggested – reducing the maintenance of the buildings, not publicising the Museum, only having one exhibition a year, raiding the contingency fund, reducing maintenance of the grounds, not cutting the grass so much, charging more for using the facilities. We learnt that the backlog of maintenance on the buildings now stands at £3,770,000, which represents nearly £100,000 for every year since the Joint Committee took over in the 1960s. This arrangement for running the park and museum must surely come to an end.

A report on forward planning revealed that Cabinet Members of Ealing Council and the Leadership of Hounslow Council had met to consider the future of Gunnersbury. As a result Dr Stewart Harding of the Parks Agency has been commissioned to explore options for the future management of the estate, and a second study, on the future of the two Mansions, has been commissioned from Arup Research + Development.

In addition, as a result of the fire in the Farm Changing Rooms, Ealing Council staff are assisting with the commissioning of a sports development plan by October. The recommendations from this last study would be implemented by seeking grants and supported by the insurance payments from the fire.

The Committee heard that Michael Cross of the Butterfly House at Syon Park would probably be making a planning application in August to build his new Butterfly House in Gunnersbury Park.

It was agreed that the museum's opening hours should be increased to 11am-4pm in the winter and 11am-5pm in the summer (April to October). The Museum also now has a new telephone system and broadband for computer access.

Future meetings of GPJC will be on 24 September and 10 December at 6.30pm in the Small Mansion at Gunnersbury.

Did you know . . . ?

While searching the internet for up to date information on the London Mela, I discovered that a song called *In Gunnersbury Park* had been recorded in 1991 by The Hit Parade for Sarah Records, the cult indie label of the late eighties/early nineties. It is amazing what you can find!

However, my further searches failed to find either the lyrics or a sound recording of the song that I could listen to. If anyone reading this has a copy we ought to make sure that we transcribe the lyrics – and maybe the Museum ought to have the record in its collection?

OUR MEMBERS – AND THEIR VIEWS

As subscriptions became due in April, this is the time of year when we update the mailing list.

The total number of Friends is now around 220 and we send the Newsletter to various local groups and press contacts, making a circulation of 250. New members continue to join – welcome to those who are reading this for the first time! – and it's good that some who have moved away wish to retain a link with Gunnersbury through the Friends.

Some of you sent in notes and letters with your cheques. For example, Mary Poulter wrote to endorse strongly the view expressed by Marilyn Buekett in the last issue about the poor design and quality of the steps near the Bath-House. Melda Hynes commented that having the regular Newsletter had made her Park visits more interesting.

Sadly Mary Haswell decided not to renew her membership and writes, "I took my children there 40 plus years ago and my 7-year-old granddaughter has enjoyed the playground. . . But the people who take dogs into the park now show little consideration for the needs of elderly people or those with disabilities. If one is unsteady on one's feet it is frightening to have dogs rushing up and barking. . .

I was grateful that parking by the Small Mansion was still allowed for people with disabilities,, but council employees fill this car park when they have meetings, which has meant me having to forgo my exercise.

On a positive note I am pleased that the toilets are to receive long overdue renovation. However, the decline of Gunnersbury Park means I must now pollute the environment by driving further to find a more friendly place."

LACE EVENTS AT GUNNERSBURY

The Lace Guild's exhibition continues at the Museum and these events accompany the exhibition. Please note that you must order tickets direct from the Lace Guild two weeks before each event. Full details are in a leaflet available at the museum or on the Guild's web-site at www.laceguild.org.

Sessions in the Park café:

21 & 22 Aug

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

18-19 Sept

Armenian Lace Workshop (2 days) Making knotted needle-lace, with Pat Trott. 1-5pm, for beginners and experienced makers. £16.50 for LG members, £19 non-members.

11 September

National Lace-Making Day

The Lace Guild will organise lace-making sessions all over Gunnersbury!

TV & VIDEO WANTED

The Museum needs a large (17" plus) TV and video recorder so it can show videos of past matches in the Brentford Football Club exhibition this autumn. If you are up-grading your TV or VCR and discarding the old one please contact Vanda Foster on e-mail gp-museum@cip.org.uk or phone 020 8992 1612. "Have car, can collect", says Vanda

Letters and contributions to the Newsletter are welcome.

NEXT ISSUE SEPT 2004

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

MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS

On show now:

Lace at Gunnersbury (until September 26)

Highlights from the Lace Guild collection, some shown with clothing from the museum's collection.

Behind the Scenes at the Theatre (until August 15)

75 years of the Questors Theatre, Ealing's amateur theatre club, established in 1929. The exhibition includes photos and programmes from early productions and 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*, and costumes from *The Snow Queen* and *Hedda Gabler*, show how the plays are staged and you can walk through a piece of theatre set to see how it is constructed.

Bread Street (until 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 wholemeal loaves at the Celtic Baker in Spitalfields and gold and purple bags of Elephant Atta flour in a Southall shop, capturing 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.

MEMBERSHIP DETAILS

If you are already a Friend, do encourage someone else to join! If you are not, sign up now to join our mailing list and receive the Newsletter. The subscription, at £3, is very modest - but more members mean a better the income and a stronger voice! There are subscription forms in the Museum or just send your cheque, name and address to the Membership Secretary, Joan Catterall, by post at 39 Lionel Road, Brentford, Middlesex TW8 9QZ.