

NEWSLETTER

From the Editor

We are almost back into the quarterly pattern of Newsletters again. This time we bring you two newsletters instead of one as we have agreed to distribute the first issue of a Gunnersbury Park newsletter produced by Richard Gill, the new Development Manager for the estate.

There is a short piece about Richard overleaf. In this role, he will be working with the new Regeneration Board for Gunnersbury to plan future conservation and development work in order for funding to be raised. We wish him well with the enormous task that he has taken on!

NEW CONTRACTOR TO MANAGE GUNNERSBURY

Though Gunnersbury is jointly owned by Ealing and Hounslow, its management is the responsibility of Hounslow Council, which has for the last ten years contracted out its leisure and cultural services to CIP. From 1 July 2008 John Laing Integrated Services have taken on the contract in place of CIP, with parks services sub-contracted to Continental Landscapes. Libraries, Museums and Heritage are likely to be put under a single charitable company called the Hounslow Community Trust.

The Curator will be a member of the new Management Team and has been asked how her team would like to see the museum service develop. So far the staff seem to have been pleased with the Laing managers' approach; they have listened to staff comments and responded with the promise of a regular maintenance team, pest controllers and so on.

GUNNERSBURY REGENERATION BOARD

The Gunnersbury Regeneration Board, with councillors from both Ealing and Hounslow, replaced the Gunnersbury Park Joint Committee. With the new municipal year membership of the Regeneration Board has changed. Neither Council makes reference to the Board on its website and the Board continues to meet in private. As far as we know it has not yet recruited independent members though this was agreed before the GPJC was wound up.

THE CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

The consultation process on the draft *Conservation Management Plan* (CMP), with meetings, a small exhibition and a questionnaire, is now complete. Many Friends attended the public meeting in early April. The revised Plan takes into account the comments received and will now form the basis for key decisions about the whole Gunnersbury Park estate in the future. As new information is discovered and new ideas are identified for the care, use and sustainability of Gunnersbury, the Plan will be revised and modified. Next an options appraisal is being commissioned, to evaluate possible approaches to conserving and developing Gunnersbury and the costs involved.

If you want to see the plan it is available on the Hounslow Council website at www.hounslow.gov.uk/gunnersbury. If you do not have a computer, don't forget that many public libraries offer free access to computers and staff will help you to find what you want. The report is a substantial document so this is an inexpensive way of making it available in place of costly paper copies.

CYCLING IN THE PARK

At the public meeting about the Conservation Management Plan in April some speakers commented on cycling in the Park, both for and against. We asked Angela Devas, who represented the Ealing Cycle Campaign at the meeting, to provide a note for the Newsletter.

She writes as follows:

We welcome the idea of a new structure and the new CMP for Gunnersbury Park. Though it is a large open space in a densely populated area, Chris Blandford Associates, the consultants who drafted the CMP, had little to say about cycling.

We would like to propose three things.

First, greater provision of Sheffield racks (for parking bicycles) at strategic points around the park. There are a few, but there was no audit in the CMP and there should be many more, clearly signposted, by the playing fields, gates, car parks and so on. When I go jogging in the park I have to lock my bicycle to a park bench!

Secondly, we would like cycling routes through the park, as part of the London Cycle Network. Despite initial misgiving, shared cycle routes work extremely well, but they need careful signage. This would encourage park use in the early morning and evening, giving a greater sense of security and more use of the more remote areas of the park. The London Cycling Campaign could advise on this.

Thirdly, maps should be available showing easy ways to get to the park, so that able-bodied people feel more confident about cycling there, rather than driving. Transport for London provides free cycle maps.

RICHARD GILL

Gunnersbury now has a Development and Regeneration Manager. Richard Gill took up this new post at the end of February and has an office in the Museum. His first task was to manage the consultation process on the Conservation Management Plan, so some of you have seen him in action already.

He has an honours degree in landscape architecture and is a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute. He has worked as a landscape architect, contract manager and parks manager in both the public and private sectors. As the Senior Landscape Officer for the London Borough of Hounslow he worked on historic landscapes at Hogarth's House, Chiswick House Gardens, Boston Manor Park and Gunnersbury Park itself.

Richard's last post was as a member of the team which prepared the application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for Chiswick House and Gardens. As this is both an internationally important garden and a public park, part of his role was to ensure that the plans fully considered providing public access, appropriate play facilities and adequate areas for dog walking during the proposed works. These matters may not be high on the historic restoration agenda but he believes they are essential qualities of a public park for local people.

Richard hopes to establish at Gunnersbury a network of stakeholders as a Park Forum. By this means each group can voice its particular concerns within an overall vision for the park which balances all the different needs.

For example, at Chiswick he encouraged a group of dog walkers to help produce a Code of Conduct for dog-walking which he believes has already helped in the management of the park.

At Gunnersbury he wants to create a management plan which will demonstrate a balance between the conservation of historic features and delivering community benefits, with the aim of eventually achieving Green Flag status. (This is a nationally recognised standard for parks).

There is a lot to be done in planning for the future and identifying the funds required for investment and for maintenance. This will include increasing the revenue of the park and finding suitable uses for vacant and derelict buildings so that a sustainable improvement is possible. Richard has drafted the new Gunnersbury newsletter which is being mailed to Friends with this issue of our own Newsletter.

SCHOOL LOAN BOXES

The museum education service has recently launched two school loan boxes – *The Victorian Household* and *World War II – The Home Front*. These can be booked by Ealing and Hounslow schools who either cannot afford to come to the museum sessions, or who want to use the boxes to prepare before they come.

They contain photographs, original objects, interpretation, games and puzzles, all funded by a grant from MLA London. They may be hired for two weeks at a time and must be collected and returned to the museum by the teacher. The cost is £10 (plus a £40 deposit).

A NEW ACQUISITION FOR THE MUSEUM

The League of Friends of Chiswick Hospital recently gave to the Museum the bronze plaque commemorating the founding and building of Chiswick Cottage Hospital by Dan Mason in 1912.

Dan Mason and his brother Charles were the founders of the Chiswick Soap Company in 1878. One of their chemists invented a polish which, launched in 1906 at a penny a tin, was to become famous as *Cherry Blossom* boot polish. By 1926 the firm had changed its name to the Chiswick Polish Company and was soon producing a range of shoe and household polishes, including *Mansion House*. In 1930 they amalgamated with the Nugget Polish Company to become Chiswick Products Ltd. Their factory was a local landmark and employed many local residents.

The Masons were renowned for their paternalistic approach to their staff, who were given the benefit of their own hospital, gymnasium, sports ground, model housing development and club. Dan Mason disliked being photographed so this plaque with its portrait head is a welcome addition to the archives. It will complement the Museum's existing collection relating to the firm, with *Cherry Blossom* tins, advertisements for Chiswick Products, oral history recordings of factory staff and copies of staff journals.

Members of the League of Friends brought the plaque to the Museum with Caroline Moore, a descendant of Dan Mason. On



The plaque with Dan Mason's portrait

their visit Carolyn Hammond showed them an early hospital register from the collection at Chiswick Local Studies Library. Mrs Moore has since sent a generous cheque for which the Museum is extremely grateful.

Vanda Foster

THE INCE QUILT

The very fine, large patchwork quilt on show in the Museum has geometric panels of mixed fabrics and images of plants (auriculas and lilies), fruit (pineapples) and Biblical scenes in its borders. The quilt represents many hours of work using good quality early 19th century fabrics. Usually known The Acton Quilt, it was given in 1931 by a Miss Graham of Creswick Road, Acton and said to have been worked by members of the Ince family in about 1810.

In 2007 David and Amanda Knights wrote up and gave to the museum their detailed piece of research on the Grahams and the Inces, commenting upon the very great value of the 19th century censuses now available on the internet. They had made a lot of progress in finding Grahams (there were several Miss Grahams at Creswick Road) and Inces and their Acton connections.

Quite separately I was interested in the accuracy of the plants and fruits included in the quilt's design, because I was researching nursery gardeners in 17th and 18th century Brentford and Chiswick. Perhaps the Ince family were gardeners? I did not trace any local gardeners of that name, but I did find a family of Inces who seemed to fit the bill. The Knights has found the same family but discounted them as being from Chiswick and not Acton.

This was a family of women, Ellen (or Ella) Ince and her five grown-up daughters, living in 1841 at Devonshire Place, opposite the Roebuck pub. By 1851 they were at 2 Williams Terrace, still standing on the south side of Chiswick High Road near British Grove. Ellen was born in Cheshire and is described as owning property; she was 81 and her daughters were in their 30s and 40s in 1851. A family of women with time on their hands might well



A pineapple from the border

have taken on such a project as this quilt. It would have been a genteel and skilled spare-time occupation using fabric scraps from their old clothes and furnishings. It was also work they could do together or as individuals.

On both sides of Chiswick High Road at that time were nurseries, orchards and market gardens, and a little further west, on a site between today's Dukes Avenue and Sutton Court Road were the gardens of the Royal Horticultural Society. Perhaps this is where they saw the plants and rare fruits that they stitched? *Val Bott*

WHAT'S ON

On Your Doorstep – Images of Ealing and Hounslow

A new exhibition opens 1 August, showing contemporary photographs of local people and places taken by the Ealing branch of London Independent Photography. This is a follow-up to their exhibition here last year, which proved extremely popular.

Museum opening hours: 11am to 5pm daily. Admission free

The Mela

This remarkable event, celebrating Asian culture and creativity, was first held at Gunnersbury in 2003. It is now Europe's largest South Asian cultural festival and one of the most visually attractive events in London.

The 2008 Mela takes place on 10 August between noon and 8.30 pm and is set to be the best yet, with 7 entertainment areas and spectacular performances from many artists. There will be something for everyone, with classical and modern music and dance. The BBC Asian Network is sponsoring the main stage which will feature Bollywood stars.

Other stages include the London Flavas Stage, presented by BBC Radio 1 and iXtra, the Indo Electronica stage, the BBC Asian Network Mix Tent and the Community Cabaret Stage.

Children and families will love the free arts and interactive entertainment of the Magic Mela area as well as the funfair. The food market features the very tasty food from around the world, but especially from South Asia, and there's a craft market and business exchange as well.

The event is produced by Ealing Councils supported by the Mayor of London. The programme is on the website at www.londonmela.org.

GUNNERSBURY'S BUILDINGS AT RISK

On 9 July English Heritage announced its annual *Heritage at Risk* list – since 1991 this has drawn attention to threatened buildings of historic importance and as a result many buildings have been saved and removed from the list. The scheme now also embraces battlefields, shipwrecks, monuments and gardens; 19% of the London buildings listed are, like Gunnersbury, owned by local authorities.

Gunnersbury Park is regarded as a *Gardens at Risk*, and a photo appears on the English Heritage website. Nine structures at Gunnersbury are listed as *Buildings at Risk*. These are the archway and the remains of the East Lodge, the 17th century boundary wall and the gothic ruins, the Large Mansion and the Small Mansion, the two stable blocks and the Potomac Tower. Seven of these are described as Category A, "at immediate risk of further deterioration, no solution agreed" while the Large and Small Mansions, being occupied are Category C "slow decay, no solution agreed." This is why the *Conservation Management Plan* matters so much.

PARK MEMORIES . . .

As we mentioned in the last issue, Vanda Foster, the museum's curator, is collecting memories and old photos of the Park. There are surprisingly few records of the landscape, buildings or activities in the Park since the Rothschilds sold it in 1925. If you have photographs do lend them to the museum to copy, to help trace the park's history and especially to identify some features which have changed over the twentieth century. Vanda is especially keen to find pictures of a clamshell fountain and many statues which have been described to her. If you have old photos taken in the park, look carefully at what is in the background! You can lend photos for copying – it is not necessary to give them away, though donations are always welcome. Phone Vanda Foster on 020 8992 1612 or email vanda.foster@laing.com.

FRIENDS of GUNNERSBURY PARK & MUSEUM

The membership year began on 1 April – please renew your membership to stay in touch. Thanks to all who have done so already. If you are already a Friend, please encourage someone else to join; if you are not yet a Friend do sign up now. The subscription, at £5, is very modest - but a bigger membership means a better income and a stronger voice. Send your cheque made out to the Friends of Gunnersbury Park & Museum, with your name and address, to Joan Catterall, Membership Secretary, 39 Lionel Road, Brentford TW8 9QZ. And donations are always welcome.



Friends' contributions to the Newsletter are always welcome – the next issue will be prepared in September 2008

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