

Walters & Cohen has added a new pavilion to the beloved **Horniman Museum** in Forest Hill. Already an architectural landmark, this latest addition had to be carefully considered, reports *Clare Dowdy*

Right: The new Garden Pavilion at the Horniman Museum comprises two rectangles, with the larger one mostly glazed, clad pre-weathered black zinc

Below: A larch-panelled event and educational space is fully glazed on three sides, allowing maximum daylight in through decorative resin panels

With its over-sized, over-stuffed walrus, jellyfish with knotted tendrils, and quirky world music gallery, the Horniman Museum and Gardens is held in real fondness by south Londoners.

As well as it being a great place for children, it's an architectural landmark. So anyone planning to add to that architecture would have to think long and hard.

Its founder Frederick John Horniman was a Victorian tea trader, philanthropist and avid collector, whose mission was to 'bring the world to Forest Hill'. His eye was particularly caught by wildlife – there's a large natural history gallery where the walrus resides – and native artefacts.

Since 1901, his collection has been housed in a purpose-built museum designed by Charles Harrison Townsend, a key figure in the Arts and Crafts movement and designer of the original Whitechapel Gallery.

Now, the Horniman has had £2.3m spent on it, courtesy of the Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery Fund through the Parks for People scheme.

Key to the changes are an improved layout and revamping of the 16.5-acre gardens, a new Gardens Pavilion, a play area with outdoor musical instruments, and

the return of Townsend's bandstand to its former glory.

The whole project was masterminded by landscape architecture practice Land Use Consultants, while Walters & Cohen was responsible for the pavilion and the bandstand, and the 'sound garden' was the work of Acoustic Arts.

Much of this action is on the eastern wall of the squarish site. From the museum building, visitors walk up an incline to the sound garden – in an area which previously housed the rubbish bins. This being a museum, there is an educational link from the xylophone wall, drainpipe drums et al, back to the music gallery inside. What's more, all the pieces are tuned to D, so any improvising can't help but be harmonious.

THE EFFECT IS OF A CONTEMPORARY LOW-LEVEL TREE HOUSE, CREATED BY THE INTERPLAY OF THE TWO FORMS

From there to the octagonal bandstand, which has lost its corrugated iron roof and rotting hand rails in favour of sliding glass doors, oak flooring and the restoration of the original weather vane. A dance floor has been installed in front of the bandstand, with the idea that this will be an al fresco venue for events.

With the bandstand's reinstalled glazing, the views over architectural London are even better displayed: with Kate MacIntosh's Dawson Heights Estate from the Sixties in the foreground to Battersea Power Station and The Shard beyond.

But the main event in architectural terms is Walter & Cohen's pavilion, which will host school groups, conferences, lectures and public performances. Sitting on a steep incline, it comprises two rectangular boxes of the same length but different widths and heights.

The front larger and taller one is mostly glazed, the framing structure clad in pre-weathered black zinc. Inside, light is abundant in the front part of the building: three of its sides are wall-to-ceiling glass, allowing the daylight to pour in through the windows and diaphanous decorative resin panels.

The services are in the block

behind – kitchen, cloakroom, toilets. Timber-clad inside as well as out, it leads seamlessly to the children's low-level wash-station, from where they can go straight outside to the Horniman's living exhibits – alpacas, sheep, goats, chickens, rabbits and ferrets will be joining the collection later this year.

This rectangle forms the back wall of the covered, larch-panelled terrace, and in fact extends over the slope beyond the terrace's railings. The effect is one of a low-level contemporary tree-house, created by the playful relationship of these two forms. And as a result, the pavilion is easy on the eye from every elevation.

This service block has a brown roof – a sub-soil with pebbles to allow natural growth. It's in keeping with the leafy surrounds and also mirrors the 'living roof' of the existing library building – part of the 2002 Allies and Morrison extension.

Walters & Cohen has been sensitive to the site's earlier heritage too, hence its zinc cladding echoing the black timber frame of the adjacent Dutch barn and the use of a muted sap-green paint for the bandstand, a colour which references the mosaic on the front of the museum building.

The museum is hoping that this investment will boost visitor numbers, from the current yearly footfall of 700,000 to 825,000 by 2015. It's also hoped that the new landscaping and the pavilion in particular will encourage a campus feel, with visitors exploring more of the grounds and facilities. Certainly, if the events held here are a success, it will shift the site's centre of gravity.



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