



The Friends of Osterley Park

• NEWSLETTER •

Issue 1

October 1990

From the Chairman

Dear Friends

Welcome to the first of our quarterly newsletters – in this and each future issue we will be bringing you up-to-date news items, reporting on the latest stage in the National Trust's programme of conservation and improvement at Osterley.

We'll be giving you advance notice of any forthcoming events, too – and to start the ball rolling you can find details of our Christmas Party, and of next year's summer event, in this first issue.

Also in this first edition is a brief history of the 18th Century Gardens and Park and the Trust's plans for restoration. The author, Ted Fawcett, gives us a fascinating insight into the origins and later development of this beautiful landscaped garden. We will be publishing other features on the history and development of Osterley later.

I am delighted to say that there are now well over 100 Friends of Osterley Park and membership is growing steadily. Your own support is greatly valued and by joining us you are already helping the National Trust in its work at the property.

But there is still so much to be done. More Friends are needed, as are volunteers to help with some tasks, particularly as Room Stewards, or other projects in support of the Trust in the house and grounds. If you think you might be able to help, the names of your contacts – and how to get in touch with them – are detailed in page 4. Or why not pass the information to a friend?

If your name is already on our list of volunteers, we will be in touch with you very soon!

Finally, if you have any comments or suggestions for inclusion in future issues, please write to the Editor, whose name and address are also shown on page 4.

Finally, I do hope this newsletter and the ones that follow will keep you in touch with all the many activities taking place and help you to make the most of your own keen interest in Osterley Park.

Sheila Chapman

(Mrs) Sheila Chapman
Chairman
Friends of Osterley Park



Osterley

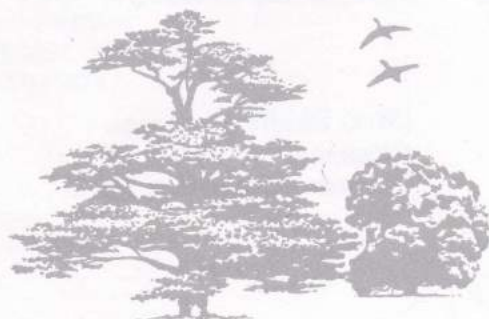
As soon as a visitor enters the gates the importance of Osterley Park is apparent. It is a unique survival, a great country estate, still in all essentials intact, almost, but not yet entirely, engulfed by London.

Once past the gates, the roar and stress of today's world is left behind; the long, straight avenue planted with a variety of trees passes between farmland, both arable and pasture, horses and cattle graze, a crop of wheat ripens. In spring the grass is alight with daffodils.

The park enters history when, during Queen Elizabeth's visit in 1576, we learn from the Gaol Delivery Rolls that two women, while the Queen was in residence, 'maliciously, diabolically and illegally tore up the palings round the park, to the great disquiet and disturbance of the said lady the Queen'. This is evidence that the estate had recently been emparked and that the two women were protesting against loss of Common Rights. The 140 acres now owned by the Trust are open to the public seven days a week.

There is little evidence for the appearance of the park as it was in the time of Sir Thomas Gresham, the original builder of the house, except for two courtyards to the east, a stable block to the north, and an avenue, long disappeared, to the west. The surrounding land was flat, with marshy ponds and contained a heronry, which still exists.

The first map is contained in Roque's Survey of London, 1741-45, and shows the park as it was after many changes of ownership just before it was purchased by the Child family. It was a typical seventeenth century layout with radiating avenues and canals, and a formal wilderness behind the stable block.



The estate was bought by Sir Francis Child in 1711. Sir Francis was the model for William Hogarth's 'Industrious Apprentice', rose to be Lord Mayor of London, and father of the banking profession. The transformation of the house and park were initiated and completed by his grandsons Francis and Robert, during the period 1750-1780.

The first architect to be employed was Sir William Chambers, to whom we owe the present Long Gallery, and also the Temple of Pan. Chambers was working at Kew during the 1760's and it must be presumed that he exercised a considerable influence on the design of the park, for long attributed to Mrs. Child and her steward Mr. Bunce.

Between them they altered the design into a good example of the English Landscape Style, with two lakes, clumps of trees and a perimeter, or sheltered belt. Elms were the predominant tree at that time, with a number of even older oaks, and it was not until the 7th Earl and his Countess returned from Government service abroad to live at Osterley in the 1880's that exotic trees began to be planted in that quantity.

Lord Jersey planted, first and foremost, oaks, red and scarlet oaks from North America, the fast growing Turkey Oak from Asia Minor, the huge leaved 'Hungarian Oak', Quercus Frainetto, of which there is a magnificent stand in the West Woods, the Cork Oak, of which there is a large specimen near the Cedar Lawn; and the semi-evergreen Luccombe Oak, which is a cross between the Turkey and Cork oaks. Even more exotic is the Daimo Oak, near the west side of the house, a native of Japan, with enormous leaves.



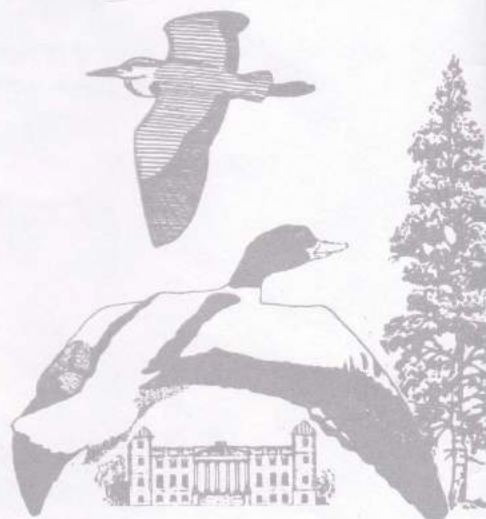
He also planted a border of shrubs between the house and the lake, many species of rhododendron in the West Woods, and exciting trees such as hickory, whose leaves turn orange-yellow in autumn, the yellow-leaved catalpa; paulownia's with panicles of mauve flowers in May, and the black walnut, which also turns bright yellow at leaf fall.

One of the reasons for coming to Osterley Park is to see these trees, but most of all it is to experience real countryside, real farmland with an unbelievable two and a half miles of Heathrow.

It is still possible to see as many as twenty herons at the same moment, to watch three pairs of Great Crested Grebe diving for fish, to hear siskins, winter migrants from Scandinavia, singing as they feed on the tops of the alders, to observe tree-creepers and nuthatches and woodpeckers, and to find the fields covered with migrant flocks of fieldfares and redwings in winter.

All this is the gift of the ninth and present Earl of Jersey to the National Trust. It is our duty to see that this gift is wisely used, and to defend it against development. It is the last great estate still virtually intact in Greater London; it is an invaluable lung for west London citizens, it is beautiful and precious. Long may it so remain.

Author: Ted Fawcett



NEWS ROUND UP

SAFETY MEASURES

The construction of 'speed dips' in the main driveway has caused some difficulties but, alas, safety measures were necessary as a precaution against speeding drivers. The dips have proved very effective since they were introduced but the Trust will be introducing better marker posts to make them more obvious.

It is now reported that some vehicles are parking in the drive or using it for U-turns, problems which are being looked at.

Meanwhile, architects Carden & Godfrey have been asked to look at fire protection measures for the house and surrounding buildings. At present they are consulting the relevant authorities about their proposals, and it is hoped that work will commence in the new year.

STORM DAMAGE MADE GOOD

Tiles and roofing damaged in last January's storm have now been repaired. Some of the trees which were lost in the storm still lie where they fell. They have been made safe and will finally be cleared by the garden staff in their winter programme of work.

The National Trust will begin re-planting trees and shrubs following the losses in the storms. In addition, horse chestnuts are to be planted between the house and stables, and shrubs will be reinstated in the pleasure grounds.

IMPROVEMENTS TO ENTRANCE

Plans are also being drawn up to renew and re-position the entrance gates facing Jersey Road, setting them back to make it safer for pedestrians, passing traffic and vehicles entering and leaving the grounds. Once planning permission, finances and other considerations have been finalised, the work can go ahead, hopefully early in 1991.

CAR PARK TO GET 'FACE-LIFT'

Work has begun on resurfacing and upgrading the visitors' car park. In due course a noticeboard will be installed to provide a map and other useful information. A formal footpath from the car park will also be established alongside the lake. This will reduce the extensive erosion and compaction of this area which can be returned to grass.

LITTER BINS

Another move which has caused comment has been the removal of some litter bins. Regrettably there is simply not enough manpower to cope with the disposal of ever-increasing amounts of waste deposited by the public... sadly a minority of visitors regard our litter-bins as convenient rubbish-dumps. So in line with other National Trust properties we are now encouraging all visitors to take their rubbish home with them.

GARDEN SEATS

Enjoying a walk in the grounds is one of the greatest joys of Osterley Park whatever the season. Whether it is to take a much-needed rest or simply to stop and admire the view, the National Trust is aware that seats are needed at strategic locations; so they are looking at plans for providing new seating close to the house.

As always, appropriate location and design of seats is of paramount importance to ensure that they are in sympathy with the setting of this fine country house. Proposals for new garden seats have already been drawn up and will include some around the trunks of specimen trees in the pleasure grounds. It is hoped that the Friends will be able to help with the cost of these.



TEA ROOM

The tea room re-opened in June under the direct management of the Trust. The kitchen and seating area has been refurbished and cleaned, and an enthusiastic team recruited to run it under the management of Julie Dunn. It has been a great success and some say it produces the best home-made cakes in the Region!

A LOOK AT THE PAST

During the summer Julian Munby of the Oxford Archaeological Unit has carried out a detailed survey of the stable block and its history. This has already revealed some of the building's fascinating past and will be invaluable when planning its future uses.

DOGS

During this year, visitors have been asked to keep dogs off the lawns near the house as these areas are especially popular with young children. The use of signs and leaflets for dog owners has proved quite effective and the new policy has been welcomed by visitors.

OPENING ARRANGEMENTS 1991

Discussions continue between the National Trust and the Victoria & Albert Museum about the possibility of the Trust taking on the administration and opening of the house next year. In any event, the house will be closed from the 1st January to the end of March next year for essential works. It is intended that it should re-open on 30th March: Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays 11.00 am - 5.00 pm, and Wednesdays - Fridays from 1.00 pm - 5.00 pm although some rooms may have to remain closed until works are complete.



SPECIAL EVENTS

I have been given the responsibility of organising the Special Events for The Friends of Osterley Park. At the moment we have two planned on our Programme of Events, the Christmas Party on Saturday 15 December 1990, and George Melly with John Chilton's Footwarmers entertaining al fresco on Saturday 15 June 1991.

I am keen that anyone with specialised knowledge of bird watching, country walks or gardening contacts me so that we can extend our activities at the house. We have a lovely park and lake and in time gardens will be a feature. It would be nice if members with the appropriate skills could lead small groups in the above activities at Osterley.

Please contact me if you feel you can help.

Mrs Sonia Pearson
21 Creffield Road
London W5 3RR

CALLING ALL HELPERS

I would appreciate hearing from anyone who could help with the following jobs from time to time at our Special Events:

- Organising the car park
- Electrics/Amplification/Sound/Light
- Organising a wine bar table
- Purchasing wine and transporting to Osterley
- Serving food
- Selling programmes
- Organising a raffle
- Catering
- Cooking
- Artwork/printing
- General helper
- Stage Manager ready to oversee an event

Mrs Sonia Pearson
21 Creffield Road
London W5 3RR

USEFUL ADDRESSES

If you are interested in finding out more about becoming a Room Steward, or can help with any other project in the house or grounds, or have some suggestions for future issues of this newsletter – or if you would just like to know more about The Friends of Osterley Park – please contact:

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