

The Friends of Osterley Park



NEWSLETTER

Issue 129 Summer 2023 £1 (free to members)



**John James OBE
1937 – 2023**

John James OBE 1937 – 2023

John joined the Friends of Osterley Park as Membership Secretary in 2004 which role he held until 2017. He formally became Chairman in May 2012 relinquishing this role at the May 2023 AGM. All at Osterley remember his kind and courteous ways. John was a very caring man and took people under his wing.

John was born in Llanelli, West Wales, was educated at Hereford Cathedral School and joined the family tailoring business. His involvement with tennis came when he became a Welsh Lawn Tennis Association council member in 1963; he was greatly involved in junior tennis as well as becoming an international umpire, officiating at the Wimbledon Championships. He was elected to represent Wales on the LTA in 1972, becoming the LTA assistant secretary the following year and in 1981 LTA secretary. In 2001 John was elected vice-chairman of the British Olympic Association and chairman of the British Olympic Foundation and on his retirement in 2002 he was made president of Tennis Europe, a post he kept for six years. John was named an OBE in the 2003 New Year's Honours list for services to lawn tennis. He and Patricia continued to enjoy their daily visits to the Centre Court during the Wimbledon Championships.

John was a long-term resident in Osterley, a church warden at St Mary's, chair of the local Probus Club, and maintained a keen interest in all rugby matters as a former chairman of London Welsh and as a patriotic Welshman proud of his roots. He carried the Olympic torch in the relay in West London in July 2012.

Chairman's Report

Howard Simmons

I'm pleased to be taking over the role as Chair of the Friends of Osterley Park from John James albeit in very sad circumstances. Under John's chairmanship the Friends have greatly prospered. We will miss John and his wife Patricia (Hon Secretary from 2004) greatly at Committee meetings. I personally very much appreciated John's warm, dignified and

highly effective chairing of the Friends and will seek to continue and build on this solid foundation.

Our deepest sympathy goes to Patricia, and her sister Anne who has so ably supported them both of late attending many coffee mornings with them.

The Committee had decided that in consideration of John's lengthy service, he would become our second President; very sadly this is not to be.

I'm very much looking forward to working with the friends and staff at Osterley Park and House at a time when it takes its place as one of the Trust's Treasure Houses and in its Urban Places programme. Chris Cleeve, Osterley's General Manager, updated the Friends at the AGM coffee morning – more below.

Friends enjoyed a visit to Leighton House recently and the Sailors, Saints and Samuel Pepys walk from Trinity House. We have other visits/walks to look forward to.

Any association is reliant on a good Committee to take things forward. The Friends are no different. The Committee is very stretched with some people undertaking more than one role. We are short of a Treasurer and a Newsletter Editor. Although we have advertised externally, we would prefer to have people who are already Friends. Being Treasurer is not an onerous job and you don't need to be an accountant, just to understand figures and spreadsheets. If you are prepared to join us in either role or know of someone who might, please let me know.

Report on the AGM held on 25 May 2023

Susan Parsons

The minutes of the AGM held on 26 April 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting. The Chairman's report was presented. The revised Constitution of the Friends of Osterley Park was adopted and the examined accounts for the year ending 31 December 2022 were

presented. The membership subscriptions for 2024 will remain as £10 for one person and £16 for two people at the same address.

The AGM elected:

- Howard Simmons as Chair
- Susan Parsons as Hon Secretary
- Peter Bush, John Collis, Michael Doran, Margaret Friday, Keith Rookledge and Vik Sharma as Committee members.

Thanks were recorded to John & Patricia James who were standing down having served on the Committee since 2004; John had been chairman of the Friends since 2011.

At the first Committee meeting following the AGM, the following roles were confirmed:

Chair – Howard Simmons

Vice-Chair – Peter Bush

Hon Secretary – Susan Parsons

Treasurer – *vacant*

Membership Secretary – Keith Rookledge

Visits (London) – Margaret Friday

Coach trips – Vik Sharma

Coffee mornings – John Collis

Website/Community/Publicity – Mike Doran

Newsletter Editor - *vacant*

From the General Manager

Chris Cleeve

Summary of presentation to Friends AGM on 25 May 2023

Of the three Friends groups directly connected to a property, the Friends of Osterley Park was the biggest fund raiser.

Osterley delivered the Trust priorities that by 2030:

1. Everyone Welcome: to better reflect the changing communities we serve.
2. Climate Action: to be net zero carbon as an organisation.

By prioritising Trust ambitions especially:

1. Urban places will address unequal access to nature, beauty and heritage
2. Curation and experiences will make sure our places keep evolving, attracting people and inspiring them
3. Land and nature will improve the state of nature in the UK.

Osterley is one of 28 Trust Treasure Houses - all Grade 1 listed buildings – which status means added support. Osterley participated in the Experience Design programme to better understand how it might increase what we offer to attract and inspire visitors: 500,000 people visited the park with 50,000 – 70,000 visiting the house currently. There were three conservation management plans in place covering the house, stables and park which we use to guide our decisions.

There had been several challenges since he had joined Osterley in November 2021 including weather related (floods, drought and high winds), accidents and criminal behaviour. There was a high turnover amongst the total of 50 staff, with a lot of movement within Trust properties. We currently have about 300-400 volunteers on the books. Of great concern and a top priority at the present time was water leakage from the portico with critical work having to be done to make the building watertight.

Major projects included the water source heat pump which had been planned 5-6 years ago with work starting in 2019 but only completed recently due to Covid; this involved coils submerged in the middle lake. External decoration of the stable block had started in December 2021. £1 million would be spent on buildings and conservation in the next three years including in 2024 on the south elevation of the house and conservation works of the state apartments. It is hoped in the long-term to invest in infrastructure to spread out the café, shop and toilets to protect from any damage to the historic fabric. The positioning of sporting activities away from the historic centre is also under consideration as is car parking.

The Jersey Loan is also due for renewal and 2024 marks 75 years since Osterley was given to the Trust. Consideration was being given to the long-term future in the next 50 years to the wider estate.

A question was asked as to how to encourage people into the house from the park? Consideration could be given to changing the stories; exhibiting

contemporary artwork. Whilst hosting weddings might fit with the concept of Osterley as a 'party palace' this was not part of the Trust's thinking at present. However, working with local organisations and hosting events such as Eid and Holi was (see below).

News from Osterley

Hannah Wiltshire

We've got lots of activities coming up at Osterley this summer. In July and August we will once again be taking part in the Summer of Play programme, which will offer lots of ways to get active and have fun in the Gardens and Parkland.

We have a great programme of outdoor theatre and cinema, all of them returning companies: 30 June and 1 & 2 July see the return of Adventure Cinema with Elvis, Dirty Dancing and Top Gun: Maverick. On 3 August, Heartbreak productions bring us family theatre in the form of Bad Dad, based on the book by David Walliams. Rounding out the season we have DOT productions bringing us two shows in one day on 13 August, with a matinee performance of Alice in Wonderland for families, and an evening performance of Persuasion. Tickets for all of these shows can be booked via our website: [Events at Osterley Park and House \(nationaltrust.org.uk\)](https://nationaltrust.org.uk/events-at-osterley-park-and-house)

We have Community events this summer. On 12 August we will host the first in-person Middlesex Pride event. It's a free family-friendly community event centring and celebrating the LGBTQIA+ community in Middlesex. It will be a day full of performances, stalls, food and fun, and we look forward to welcoming everyone.

We've had a lot of staff changes in the last few months: in the House Ffion is now on maternity leave; unfortunately Anna McAlaney covering as Property Curator has had to withdraw due to ill-health. We have a new role of Collections & House Manager – which Judith O'Flynn was recruited for – so we have a new Senior Collections & House Officer, Kate Simpson, and Ashlea Hutchinson has returned as Collections Assistant. In Retail Vida has joined the central NT team on secondment and her role will be covered by Indika Rodrigo. In F&B we have a new Team Leader, Dan Filipov, and Rebecca Peck is our new Cook. We have appointed a new Welcome Manager, Matthew Butler, who will start in late July.

Use of Emails

Once again, a plea for Friends who receive their newsletters in paper format to please provide us with their email address. We do send emails to Friends between newsletters and sometimes need to communicate urgently when an event is cancelled, such as the June coffee morning due to filming. You may, of course, continue to receive your newsletter in paper format. Please email your address to our Membership Secretary, Keith Rookledge - keith.rookledge@icloud.com

Membership Update

Keith Rookledge

A big thank you for renewing your membership of the Friends for another year.

Membership stands around 180. We have lost a few members this year and two people have joined us.

Payment by standing order really does help; our account details with Barclays are:

Sort Code: 20-02-06

Account Number: 70389315

We receive a lot of payments and it can be difficult to work out what they are for! Several items in one payment can cause confusion. So please remember to:

- include your surname in the bank reference and clearly mark what it is for e.g. subs, 100 Club, visit.
- make sure cheques are made payable to the 'Friends of Osterley' (do not include 'Park'), include details of what the payment is for and send to Keith Rookledge (address on back of Newsletter).

100 Club

Susan Parsons

The first draw of the year was made at the AGM on 25 May. The lucky winners were: Ed Whitaker (£100), Susan Haisman (£30) and Gillian Webster (£20).

The 100 Club is a private lottery and shares can only be allocated to paid-up members of the Friends. Half of the £12 is used by the Friends to fund projects which benefit Osterley; the remaining £6 goes into the prize fund.

This year we have lost quite a few 100 Club members with few gains so the prize pot is reduced. If any Friend would like to join or increase their holding in the 100 Club, please use the attached form.

Volunteering

Peter Mills

Osterley now has over 300 volunteers, with more than 40 new people having joined since the start of 2023. More are still needed, though: teams currently advertising for new volunteers are Bookshop, Buggy Drivers, Cycle Hire, Events, House Welcome, Rangers, Room Guides and Visitor Welcome. If you or anybody you know is interested, please contact: osterley.volunteering@nationaltrust.org.uk.

Barry Williams 1945 - 2023

Margaret Friday

Barry Williams was appointed in 1991 as the first National Trust Property Manager in charge of Osterley Park & House following his retirement from the Foreign Office with postings to Laos, South Africa, Morocco and Malawi. Barry's wife, Christine, was put in charge of organising the volunteers although she worked full time at the local college. Barry loved his stay at Osterley and introduced ideas such as the Jersey Gallery exhibitions of modern art, poetry trails in the grounds and guided tours around the house and gardens which he often led. He was a popular raconteur. The Long Gallery was repainted the correct shade of blue green replacing the mustard green which made volunteers feel ill if they spent too long stewarding there!

Barry and Christine had a flat upstairs in the House. When Barry was having some medical treatment he awoke one night sure that he had seen an owl flying around the room. He told himself it must be the medication but when he looked again there was most certainly an owl in the room. They got the owl to fly out of a window; it continued to sit on the window ledge staring in at them for several weeks.

After 14 years of service at Osterley, Barry and Christine retired in December 2004 to Worthing. His last talk to the Friends of Osterley was called "Reflections". Just weeks before his death he was in touch with me; his love of Osterley and the volunteers and Friends of Osterley was evident in his final letter.

The Unknown Lady

Margaret Friday



Many of you may remember the portrait of a lady which hung in the Breakfast Room over the mantelpiece and was reflected in the mirror opposite. She had a very positive look. The portrait was on loan from the Victoria & Albert Museum and has now been returned to them. She is no longer on display, but research has revealed some interesting information. We now believe her to be Miss Ann Teresa Fleming. Her father, Francis Fleming, was a dance instructor and when he died in 1778 his daughter continued to run the dance school in Bath, having trained as a dancer in Paris. She taught Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, and Lady Bessborough along with many members of the Georgian court. She was a wealthy and influential Bath resident. This portrait from about 1783, when she was 40, shows her in the latest Georgian fashion with high hair, lace sleeves, white muslin skirts and a lace shawl. In her hand she holds an invitation to *Miss Fleming's Ball* held in the Bath Assembly Rooms twice a year in spring and winter. The British Museum has this invitation in their Prints & Drawings collection; it was donated by Sarah Sophia Banks, sister of Joseph Banks. Miss Fleming's balls were well attended by the aristocracy and people of taste from around Britain. The Childs and their daughter Sarah Anne and later their granddaughter Sarah Sophia, Countess of Jersey, with her legendary love of dance would likely have attended Miss Fleming's Balls when in Bath. As Lady Jersey, Sarah Sophia is said to have introduced the Quadrille to Almack's in 1815; this was the London Dancing Club where she held a casting vote. It was claimed that it was harder to get into Almack's than into heaven. Miss Fleming lived until 1823 when she was 76 years old. The small table with identical cloth, silver inkstand and papers appear in several paintings from the studio of Joshua Reynolds so Ann Teresa may have been painted by one of Reynolds students. It would be lovely to have Ann Teresa back at Osterley, a confirmation of the love of music and dance in this party house. The painting was acquired by the V & A in 1881 for £300. Clare Stuart Wortley named her. The painting has been attributed to John Hoppner, Gilbert Stuart and Thomas Lawrence. Could modern techniques reveal the painter? The unknown lady has been solved but who was the artist?



Snippets from the past

Susan Parsons

Having become custodian of the Friends of Osterley Park newsletters (number 1 was in October 1990), I've read some fascinating pieces and

would like to share the following from 30 years ago. We'd be delighted to hear from anybody who remembers these and can add their own recollections.

A potter in the Park with 'Wyke' Green

Written for the Autumn 1992 newsletter

Sitting on the bank side of Middle Lake, fishing rod in hand, I met Michael. He had been there since crack of dawn, well muffled against the morning chill but happy watching his float, waiting to catch the 'big one'. So far that morning, he was out of luck; there was nothing in his keep-net.

Michael is one of 250 anglers who applied for an annual permit to fish in Osterley this season, which started in mid-June. The Middle Lake is stocked naturally with carp, tench, bream, pike and a few terrapins. Unfortunately, lack of rainfall has reduced the water level by about a foot this year, and fewer anglers are found around the bank. Most congregate alongside the gravel path of Osterley Lane and in the attractive woods and grassy banks, flanking the north side.

* * * * *

If you venture into the wall garden at about 9 o'clock any Wednesday morning, you are likely to meet the "Flower Ladies" - the rarely seen team, who, each week, produce the lovely floral decorations that enhance the House. Recently I met Joyce, Ella and Rita, collecting Bear's Breeches, Baby's Breath, Cosmos, and Love-Lies-Bleeding, just a few of the more unusual names of flowers grown in the garden by Lesley Orton and her team of green fingers especially for the volunteer flower arrangers. The greenery is gathered from around the Park.

I followed the ladies into the house where Margaret, Owen, Dominique and a pair of Jeans had already gathered some of the more traditional varieties in season and were planning arrangements for the 21 vases, baskets and bricks that are used each week. There are no less than seven displays prepared for the Long Gallery alone; two baskets to place under the table, and one in the fireplace in the Breakfast Room. In the Eating Room, two baskets arranged to go onto the mantelpiece. Displays are placed in all but three of the rooms open to visitors. There is even a small vase placed on the wooden loo seat of the Victorian closet in the tower room off the Long Gallery!

The Child family loved flowers; Mr Child chose the marigold as the emblem for his bank. Fresh marigolds are used extensively when in season. The huge, cream coloured, lemon scented flowers of the magnolia grandiflora, growing along the west side of the House, appear in July but last barely a couple of days when picked.

It takes the flower ladies over 24 hours work every Wednesday morning to collect and create the arrangements. On Saturday, two or three of them come back to the House to remove the dead flowers and freshen up the displays for the pleasure of the weekend visitors.

* * * * *

During a walk in the Pleasure Gardens in midsummer, I was startled to see a mechanical excavator clawing its way through the green turf, in front of the Robert Adam Garden House. A splendid tree had also disappeared. A series of semi-circular swathes were cut, then filled with hoggan – a sand and gravel mixture, popular in the 18th century for creating country paths.

The restoration of the Pleasure Gardens to its former design is part of the 1989 National Trust Management Plan for Osterley. The style, known as “Gardenesque” was created by John Claudius Loudon and was in vogue between 1820 and 1860.

Eventually, I am told, the shrub and flowerbeds will be replanted. In the meantime, a convenient seat has been built around the trunk of one large tree. Next summer, I expect to see elegant ladies, dressed in crinolines, sitting there.

Regional Open Day

Written for the Winter 1993 newsletter

This took place at Osterley on Saturday, 2 October. The objective was to give visitors an insight into developments at Osterley, and display work in progress in the Pleasure Grounds and elsewhere in the park.

The dawn was watery, but a team from the 1st Osterley Scouts arrived at 8:30 to erect a marquee, loaned by the Scout District. This was to house the Great Western Railway Preservation Society’s Jazz Band.

By mid-morning, the “Friends” stall had been put up in the Stableyard, alongside the “Batricars” with Ealing N.T.A. and the R.S.P.B close by. Then the heavens opened! Heavy rain fell from 11 to 3 o’clock and effectively discouraged most potential visitors. Those who did arrive swelled the numbers in the House, but the outdoor attractions suffered badly.

Our only consolation, as we made our way home, was to see the Upper Lake was full to overflowing– a marked contrast to last year’s drought.

News from the House

Written for the Summer 1995 newsletter

Osterley House, being the Thames & Chiltern regional showpiece for Centenary Year, had been filled with activity in the past three months. The Director-General, Sir Angus Stirling, spent a day at the property in early April, to celebrate the opening of the galleries on the ground floor. During his visit, he met a number of volunteers and friends.

During May and June, these galleries were filled with an exhibition of contemporary art, on show to visitors to the house. The kitchen and other basement rooms were also on display.

In June, the “Sculpture Trail” in the Pleasure Grounds was set up. A selection of sculptures are now set alongside the newly planted beds in front of the Adam Garden House. The beds themselves are flourishing, reproducing the planting schemes of the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Cattle are now well established in the Great Meadow, not only in cropping the grass, but also in establishing a distinctive “browse line” on the trees, marking the height to which the cattle can stretch to eat the lower leaves.

After the winter rains, the lakes appear well filled and attract a variety of wildfowl – including the ubiquitous and raucous Canada Geese. Clutches of Mallard ducklings have been seen on the Garden Lake, and a very tame heron patrols the pathway, close to the toddlers feeding bread to the ducks. The stillness of the stalking heron can cause confusion; Barry (Williams) tells us that one visitor objected to the “plastic” bird on top of the pagoda!

Monday, 10 July – Secret Gardens in the City Walk. Cost £6

Meet outside St Stephen's Walbrook at 2 pm. Closest tubes are Bank or Cannon Street tube/station. Walbrook is a pedestrian street running between Mansion House and Cannon Street.

Today Phil and Margaret will introduce you to some of the hidden gardens in the City of London. From ground floor to roof top outside and indoors we will have some real surprises for you.

Wednesday, 9 August - Boston Manor House. Cost £5

Nearest tube station is Boston Manor.

Meet at the house entrance just before 2 pm for a guided tour

Each room represents a different period and contains figures in the room which speak as you pass by. The entrance hall and staircase with copies of the original wallpaper of the early 18th century are particularly interesting. The staff will explain how and why they set up the house in this way.

Booking and Paying for Visits

Please book with Keith Rookledge either by email - keith.rookledge@icloud.com - or by using the attached form.

Payment can be made as follows:

1. By cheque payable to "Friends of Osterley" posted to Keith Rookledge (address on back of Newsletter). Do not include "Park".
2. By Bank Transfer to Friends of Osterley:
Sort Code: 20-02-06
Account Number: 70389315
3. By cash at a coffee morning or the event (as long as you have booked)

Coffee Mornings

Peter Bush

The coffee mornings for Summer/Autumn 2023 are as follows, all at 10:30 for 11:00 in the Study Base at Osterley Park.

Wednesday, 19 July Christine Diwell - Glimpses of Chiswick, Brentford and Isleworth

Thursday, 24 August Jenny-Louise Kirk – Looking after Royal guests

Tuesday, 26 September Margaret Friday – Nicholas Barbon

Wednesday, 25 October – TBC

Thursday, 23 November – TBC

Chairman

Howard Simmons

howard.simmons@icloud.com

Vice Chairman

Peter Bush

prbush@virginmedia.com

Membership Secretary

Keith Rookledge

07768 596681

keith.rookledge@icloud.com

2 West Avenue, Pinner, HA5 5BY

London Visits

Margaret Friday

07930 697748

margaretfriday@talktalk.net

Treasurer & 100 Club

vacant

Hon Secretary & Newsletter Editor

Susan Parsons

susan.parsons@virgin.net

Coach Trips

Vik Sharma

vik.sharma@yahoo.co.uk

Coffee Mornings

John Collis

collis329@hotmail.com

Website Editor

Mike Doran

mikedoran47@outlook.com

The Friends website gives you all of the current news, meetings, events, publications, and membership information relating to the work of the Friends of Osterley Park in supporting Osterley House and Park. www.e-voice.org.uk/friendsofosterleypark

Next newsletter: to be published in September 2023.