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The Friends of Osterley Park



A Supporters Group for the National Trust

NEWSLETTER

Issue 14

Spring 1994

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Ian Conacher

With growing evidence around us that Spring is approaching, it is time to look back at the achievements of the "Friends" over the past 12 months, forward to the coming Summer season, and beyond to the challenge facing the "Friends" in 1995 and after.

We had a successful Summer in 1993, which saw our first major venture into visits to other properties, made jointly with volunteers from the House and arranged by Jim Tickle.

The concert in the Long Gallery by Cantati Camerati was a memorable occasion, and we were able to hold a reception in the Entrance Hall at the end of the Season.

During the Winter, we have again run a series of "lectures" in St. Mary's Parish Hall which have been well attended.

Financially, we have had a good year. Donations have been made to the Trust to buy tools for the volunteer gardeners, producing flowers to decorate the House, and for the purchase of a barrow to enable the volunteer flower-arrangers to transport these to the House.

In the last few days, we have agreed to donate the sum of £1500 towards the cost of an 8-seater electric vehicle to shuttle visitors between the car park and the House. A further £600 has been pledged to complete the purchase, and we would be grateful for any donations that members may wish to give towards this commitment when renewing their annual subscription.

Looking forward to the new Season, our activities in the House will be restricted by work still in progress. However, we have arranged a "General Meeting" for Friends on Tuesday 19th April, when we hope do discuss with the membership some of the plans and challenges for the years ahead.

The major item this summer is, of course, the open-air theatre performances on 3rd and 4th September. The task of presenting these is being shared with Ealing N.T.A., and both groups will need to recruit members to assist, both with preparatory work and on the days. Both groups will also share in the profits!

Jim has again arranged a full programme of visits to Trust properties - further details elsewhere in this Newsletter. From past experience, early booking is recommended!

1995 is the Trust's Centenary Year, and this is being marked by many special events. Your Committee have now to consider how we can take part in these celebrations. This has brought home to us the need to co-opt members with special skills, to take on responsibility for the organisation of "Events", for publicity, and for certain other areas, so that the "workload" of the Committee can be shared out among a number of individuals.

Additionally, we have been giving some thought to the "Constitution" of the Friends. If for no other reason, it seems desirable to have an annual meeting at which the Committee can report to the membership on our "stewardship" of the money entrusted to us for the benefit of the National Trust. At such a meeting, the Committee should also seek a vote of confidence from the membership by presenting themselves for re-election.

Experience, both in the "Friends" and in other voluntary organisations, has shown that in today's difficult times, there is little competition for office - and indeed, much arm-twisting may be required to fill vacancies! However, this is all the more reason why Annual General Meetings should be held, to concentrate the minds of Committee and membership alike!

On April 19th, we hope to have a draft "Constitution" ready for discussion and, we hope acceptance by those attending.

Please come along and contribute to this meeting.

SHAKESPEARE AT OSTERLEY!

National Trust members will already know that "Open-Air Theatre" performances have been arranged at Osterley for September of this year. These will be given by the "Albion Shakespeare Company", sponsored by the Norwich Union, who will be touring Trust properties during the coming Summer. They will present "Romeo and Juliet" at 7 pm on Saturday September 3rd, and "Macbeth" on Sunday 4th.

The "Friends", together with Ealing National Trust Association, have been asked to assist the Trust by working together on the presentation of these performances, which we hope will be well supported by our members, both as audience and as volunteer helpers.

As is usual with Open-Air Theatre, the show will go on whatever the weather. Tickets obtained in advance will cost £9.00 for adults, £4.50 for children. Tickets purchased at the gate - if any remain unsold - will cost £12, with no concessions!

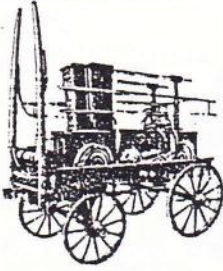
A box office has been set up for advance bookings. Applications, with cheques made payable to "Shakespeare at Osterley", and an S.A.E. should be sent to:-

"Shakespeare at Osterley"
P.O. Box 182
Isleworth
Middlesex TW7 5RQ

As a convenience to members, applications may be included with your Membership Renewal form - but, please, with a separate cheque made out as above!

THE HORSE WHO ALWAYS TURNED RIGHT

Dudley Foy



About a hundred years ago, Heston had its own village fire-brigade. Nothing very elaborate - one simple horse drawn wagon, a hand pump and one part-time fireman - a Mr. Wingrove, the local greengrocer. When the alarm was raised, Wingrove abandoned his fruit and veg, and sprinted a couple of hundred yards to the fire station, next door to the little village school. His first job was to catch the horse, who grazed on the nearby farm. Once harnessed and in the shafts, horse, wagon

and Wingrove set off to fight the fire. Leaving the tiny fire station, the horse habitually turned right toward the village. Nothing could persuade him otherwise. If the inferno was, say, at Lampton, Wingrove had to give the horse his head as far as St. Leonard's Church, and then coax him into doing a U-turn in the church forecourt, and trot off back, past the fire station, and on to Lampton.

This amusing anecdote about early life in Heston, was recounted by Andrea Cameron, the Borough Historian, at the first of this years series of Winter Talks, given on 9th February at St. Mary's Hall, Osterley. An attentive audience of more than fifty "Friends" heard Miss Cameron relate, and illustrate the history of Heston, its development from a cluster of tiny cottages, and a few noble houses in country lanes, to the area we know today.



GARDENS AND BATS!

On 23rd February, we heard Ted Fawcett speaking on "The History of Gardens". Unfortunately, his talk was somewhat curtailed by problems with the projector, only resolved by the substitution of an alternative machine from the Townswomen's Guild. However, Ted continued unperturbed, concluding with an account of some of the problems facing the current restoration of the gardens at nearby Ham House.

Patty Briggs held the attention of a large and appreciative audience on 9th March, with her talk on "Bats", illustrated by some superb slides and crowned with the opportunity to see and touch the tame creatures. (Bat drawn by David Boys of the Vincent Wildlife Trust.)

Alan Bender, of the R.S.P.B., will be talking on "Birds and Man" on 23rd March, between "Press Day" and publication of this Newsletter. We are sure that his talk will be of the same high standard as his predecessors.

EXCURSIONS 1994 "HOUSE AND GARDEN SEASON".

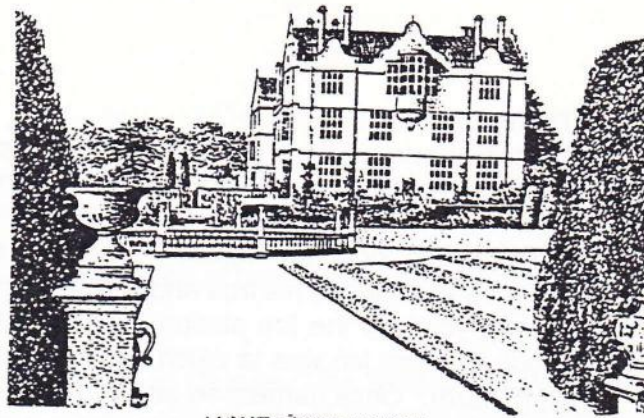
Jim Tickle

The programme of this year's outings for Volunteers and Friends has now been finalised with just one amendment to that published in the last edition of the Newsletter. As Snowhill Manor is unable to accept coach parties this year, our June excursion will include a visit to Canons Ashby.

So the full programme, printed below, encompasses seven monthly outings to twelve National Trust properties in eight different counties. With an interesting garden and house included in each visit, we hope to offer variety and value, -- and, with only one exception, the ticket costs less than eight pounds!

Day	Date	House and Garden	Time	Price	
Mon	11	April	Montacute House and Lytes Cary Manor, Somerset	9am	£8.60
Tue	3	May	Wimpole Hall and Home Farm, Cambridgeshire	9am	£7.60
Thu	2	June	Canons Ashby and Hidcote, Northants & Glos.	9am	£7.90
Wed	13	July	Ightham Mote and Emmett's Garden, Kent.	9am	£7.00
Wed	10	August	Standen and Nymans Garden, West Sussex	12 noon	£6.30
Mon	5	Sept	Upton House, Warwickshire.	9am	£7.70
Mon	3	Oct	Claydon House, Buckinghamshire	12 noon	£6.00

N.B. Cost includes gratuities, but not National Trust admission charges.

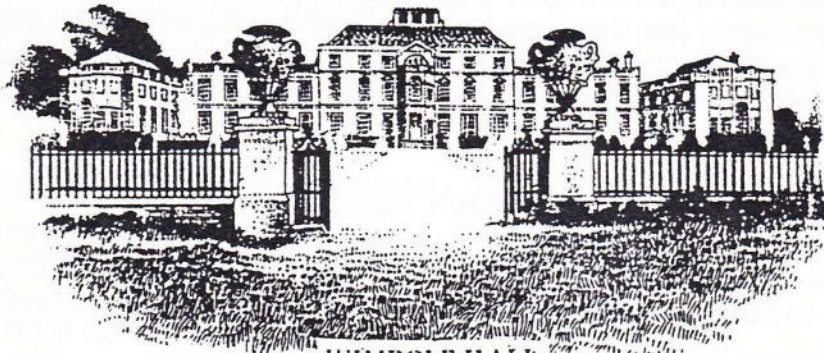


MONTACUTE HOUSE

APRIL VISIT: MONATACUTE HOUSE, built of the local golden Ham Hill stone for Sir Edward Phelips, Speaker in the House of Commons and Master of the Rolls, was completed in 1601. Decorated with gables, obelisks, turrets and pavilions, it is a most impressive house whose Long Gallery (at 172 feet, the longest surviving gallery of its period in England) houses an unrivalled display of Tudor and Jacobean portraits, lent by the National Portrait Gallery.

Together with a fine collection of 17th and 18th century furniture, Montacute boasts beautiful plasterwork and panelling, heraldic glass, tapestries and an exhibition of samplers dating from the 17th century. The layout of the gardens is contemporary with the House, but they were replanted in the 19th century.

In contrast to Montacute, the Manor House of Lytes Cary may appear less spectacular, but I'm sure that we will not find our visit here any less memorable. For five centuries the home of the Lyte family, the Manor incorporates a 16th century Great Chamber, a 15th century hall and a 14th century chapel. The gardens were originally laid out by the father of Henry Lyte, the celebrated botanist who, in 1578, dedicated his translation of the "Niewe Herball" to Queen Elizabeth I. In 1907, the house and gardens were rescued and restored by Sir Walter Jenner and given to the National Trust in 1948.



WIMPOLE HALL

MAY VISIT: The 18th century WIMPOLE HALL worthily claims to be the most spectacular mansion in Cambridgeshire and in 1843, Queen Victoria came to stay here whilst on a visit to Cambridge. Celebrated architects like Gibbs, Thornhill, Soane and Flitcroft were responsible for much of Wimpole's design. Exquisite interiors and splendid libraries are matched by a dramatic plunge bath and fascinating basement rooms. The 350-acre park, landscaped by Bridgeman, Capability Brown and Humphrey Repton, includes a huge gothic folly and a Chinese bridge.

A waggon ride or short walk through the gardens leads to Wimpole Hall Farm. The largest Rare Breeds centre in East Anglia, including Soay sheep, Longhorn cattle, Tamworth pigs and Baggot goats, this is very much a working farm where you can watch the animals being fed, milked or mucked out! The 18th century Stone Barn houses a museum of farm machinery.

The Wimpole Estate was handed to the National Trust in 1956 by Elsie Bambridge, daughter of Rudyard Kipling.



CANONS ASHBY HOUSE

JUNE VISIT: CANONS ASHBY HOUSE, a country home cradled by time, is one of Northamptonshire's historic gems. Built in the 16th century with alterations in the 1630's and 1710, it was the home of the Dryden family for over 400 years. There are Elizabethan wall paintings and panelling and quite outstanding Jacobean plasterwork. The hangings and embroidered furnishings of the Tapestry Room date from the Queen Anne period.

The medieval church across the road is well worth a visit. It survives as the only part of the vast Augustinian priory from which the hamlet of Canons Ashby takes its name.

Across the county border in Gloucestershire, **HIDCOTE MANOR GARDENS** is one of the most delightful and popular gardens in the country. Created earlier this century by Major Laurence Johnston, Hidcote consists of a series of small gardens within the whole, separated by walls and hedges. Throughout the changing seasons, there is much to admire (and buy!) amongst its rare shrubs, herbaceous borders and varied collection of interesting plant species.



HIDCOTE MANOR GARDEN

JULY TO OCTOBER VISITS: Introductory notes for these visits will be published in the next edition of the Newsletter.

Booking is now open for all the visits and a Booking Form is included with this Newsletter. Please book early, but you need not make all your bookings at once, since copies of the form will be obtainable from Jim Tickle throughout the Season. To check on ticket availability, (essential if you wish to order less than four weeks before an outing) you should phone 081 894 4174.

Osterley features in the Spring editions of both the Trust's National Magazine and the Thames and Chilterns' Regional Newsletter.

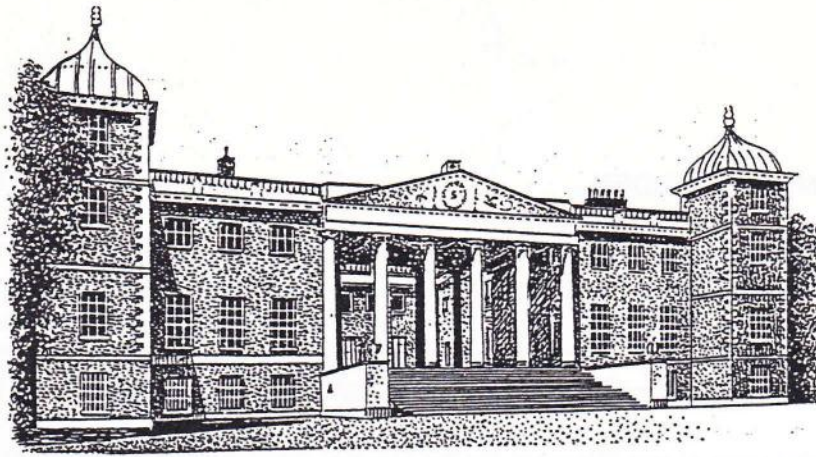
Under the heading "Double Take at Osterley" the Magazine carries a photograph of cows grazing the Great Meadow against a backdrop of the west front of the House, and comments that "if it weren't for the rumble of planes landing at nearby Heathrow airport, visitors could almost be taken in by the pastoral air of the re-created eighteenth century parkland".

It also notes that Osterley is "fast becoming one of the National Trust's key urban properties". Such is its importance that it has been designated a major project to celebrate the Trust's centenary in 1995".

The Regional Newsletter contains an update on the progress which has been made this winter in the restoration of the House and Park:-

- The repaired and redecorated exterior of the House
- The repainted library ceiling
- Planting of the Pleasure Grounds under way, using species available in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.
- The restored Adam Garden House, soon to be home to a number of citrus trees
- The Western end of the Garden Lake dredged
- The 19th century approach to the House reinstated and the 1950's drive across the lawn removed
- Cattle returning to the Great Meadow after Easter
- A new lavatory block with full facilities for disabled visitors opening in early May
- A National Trust Shop opening in the Stable Block during the summer
- New gas, electricity, water and fire mains laid to the House
- New lightning conductors on the House and Stable Block
- Leadwork renewed and pineapples restored on the four turrets of the House. One pineapple had to be remade, but the original will be on display in the new Stables Ticket and information point for visitors to inspect close-up.

In a separate piece headed "White in the Library" the Newsletter explains how the "vividly painted grotesques" on the Library ceiling are now returned to white. Adam designs exists in both white and coloured versions, and paint sections taken recently from the ceiling have shown that the first three or four schemes used were white, concurring with a report by a visitor to the House in 1770's.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Barry Williams

Although we have nearly 200 volunteers assisting us with a wide variety of tasks at Osterley, a number of new projects will require additional assistance this season. We are urgently seeking :-

ACCESS VOLUNTEERS on any afternoon from Wednesday-Sunday between April-October to provide information and Assistance in the park for less-mobile visitors and/or to operate an 8-seater electric vehicle on a shuttle service between the Car Park, House and Tea Room. Training will be given.

GRAND STABLES STEWARDS are needed for a regular commitment on Sunday afternoons from April-October to Steward the Grand Stables, which will be open to the public for the first time this season. The Stables are occupied, so a keenness for all things equestrian would be an advantage!

NATIONAL TRUST SHOP VOLUNTEERS will be welcomed as helpers in the new shop when it opens at Osterley in June. A regular weekly or fortnightly commitment will be required on any afternoon from Wednesday-Sunday up until Christmas.

In addition, we always need volunteers to assist with the established tasks of Room Stewarding, Flower Growing and Arranging and Litter Picking.

If you would like to volunteer, or require further information, please contact me on 081-560 3918 or write to The Volunteer Co-ordinator, Osterley Park House, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 4RB.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL.

Subscriptions for the year 1st April 1994 - 31st March 1995 are now due. A renewal form is included with this Newsletter.

Space has been provided on this form for those who wish to make a donation to the Access Vehicle Appeal, referred to in the Chairman's Letter.

GENERAL MEETING.

The Chairman's Letter also refers to the meeting arranged for 19th April, 1994, at the House. The evening will start with a glass of wine in the Tea Room, at 7 p.m., moving to the House at 7.30 for a discussion of plans for the future development of the "Friends" and the principles of a new Constitution. It is hoped to arrange a little light entertainment at the end of the business. Please let us know on your renewal form if you will be attending, so we can make adequate preparations!

The depths of January are hardly the time to be thinking of gardening with very much enthusiasm. In fact a short walk in the Park at the beginning of the week rather turned my thoughts towards water gardening more than anything else, (save, perhaps, a wallow for a hippo family!) However; never downhearted, ever optimistic (what gardener isn't), at least we have those delectable seed catalogues to turn to and mentally garden away to our heart's content!

1994 sees the third year of our 'Flowers for the House' project getting into full swing. Having started with a smallish patch in which a few Daisy and Cosmos seeds were thrown, we now have two quite large beds and a strip along the wall adjoining the ornamental garden, and the promise of more space still. We grow an ever expanding selection of annuals, biennials, perennial and bulbs which makes the whole enterprise fascinating from a gardeners point of view. A further dimension is provided by the requirement to grow flowers which were available during the late 18th century, as far as possible. As we are trying to provide cut flowers from April 1st until October 31st, it can be seen that we have quite a few criteria to fulfil, and there is plenty of planning, and learning, to do; though in the planning it is as well to remember the joker in the pack - the good old British weather. Could we possibly blame the weather for the fact that an entire row of Chrysanthemums failed to do the necessary until the second week of November - oh! mortification - would anyone like any very late Chrysanths?

We have a useful reference book which provides lists of plants and flowers available at the relevant time and which are still grown today, and we are constantly surprised to find annuals which are relatively easy to grow and which, because they are not very fashionable are almost unknown - to us, at least. Last year, for instance we grew Ammi, or Bishops Weed, rather similar to Cow Parsley - and quite useful as a background flower. This year we have discovered that Celosia is on our list and are going to give that a whirl too! Just watch those vases!

Our hope, at the least, is to grow flowers which are 'in the spirit of the 18th century' and as we increase our range, we shall no doubt be more rigorous with our selection. Although we do grow some perennial from seed, to speed up the process we have also bought plants from nurseries to give us a flying start. I was fortunate too, to be able to go to Cliveden, where the Head Gardener very kindly gave up a morning to go through my lists and promise some plants taken from the extensive borders there. Some of you may remember that Mr. Cotton and two of his gardeners had a tent (Gardeners Question Time) at the Regional Open Day held at Osterley in October, so I was able to 'pin them down', show them round our walled garden and convince them, I hope, that we were a worthy cause!

Our team still stands at five ladies, and we turn up regularly on a Monday morning for our hoe and a chat. Those of you who have seen the flowers in the House will know that the system has worked so far, but we would be happy to extend a welcome to new gardening volunteers. The volume of work rises to a peak during May, June and July and we would love to share this pleasurable burden with two or three more friendly souls. It's great fun and very rewarding.

