



The Friends of Osterley Park



A Supporters Group for the National Trust

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 15

SUMMER 1994

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Ian Conacher

Despite the unusually wet Spring, we have seen a few - a very few - glorious days in the past two months, which have brought the crowds out to Osterley. These have put to the test the changes made during the winter months.

The major part of the new "hoggin" drive has consolidated to give a smooth, dense surface - although there are still areas affected by the wet winter weather, which will need further work. The new park railings are in place, and the new grass is beginning to hide the scars left by the removal of the tarmac drive and the laying of the service mains. The yew hedges on the causeway and on the North side of the lawn have been removed.

The changes were, I think, viewed with some trepidation by many when they were first announced. Now that we can see the results, I for one am delighted with the new prospects opened up by these works. In particular, the view of the House and Stables from the Park is vastly improved.

The new "courtesy bus" - partly financed by the "Friends" - plying between the Car Park and the House is greatly appreciated by the less-mobile visitors to the property - and by Room Stewards arriving late for - or weary at the end of - their shift!

The new "Batricar" acquired from Stowe by the "Friends" - has been in service with the rest of the fleet, which achieved a high level of utilisation during May.

On the Bank Holiday weekend at the end of May, Jim Tickle "set up shop" with a Plant Stall, which aroused much interest from visitors. Hopefully, from such good beginnings, we can develop this as a regular attraction!

At the "General Meeting" of the "Friends" in April, a number of ideas were put forward for recruiting new Members. Your committee are actively developing these.

Our next major activity this year is the Open-air Theatre in September, when the Albion Shakespeare Company will present "Romeo and Juliet" on Saturday 3rd, and "Macbeth" on Sunday 4th. The stage will be set up in the court-yard of the Elizabethan Stable Block, with raked seating provided for the audience. Seats for these are selling well, following the announcements in the Regional Events leaflet and in our last "Newsletter". Tickets are still available by post - see application form enclosed - at £9 Adult and £4.50 Child. On the day, admission prices will be £12 and £6 respectively.

Friends who are also volunteers will have seen Barry Williams' Volunteers Newsletter of 1st June. We quote below some extracts from this:-

THE CENTENARY RESTORATION PROJECT

Wet weather is still hampering work on tidying-up the main drive and new approach to the House. It is not aided by delivery vehicles, the Dustman and the Postman, all of whom appear to be incapable of keeping to the hoggin driveway. Last week the Community Action Team spent the best part of a day preparing and re-sowing the grass verge on the new drive only to see a truck drive straight across it as they worked. The firm's Transport Manager received a piece of my mind and a threat to withdraw our business, but it was a small consolation to our hard-working Estate staff. The new lavatories opened this week. Work has now started on demolishing the old block and this should be completed by the end of the month.

The Temple of Pan is under wraps to protect it from the weather while it is being re-roofed and we undertake joinery and stonework repairs. As soon as the weather is a little more settled, the same contractor will touch-in the flaking paintwork on the Adam Garden House.

The scaffolding in the Stableyard has been removed in time for the opening of the new National Trust Shop on Wednesday 22nd June. Gutters and downpipes have been taken away for shot-blasting. At the same time lightning conductor tapes are being fixed to the walls so that they will be hidden by the downpipes when they are reinstated. Work will then move to the rear of the Stable block where the scaffolding will be taken right up to the Clock Tower to enable us to repaint it in Osterley Green. The contract should be completed by August - weather permitting, of course!

A new Machinery Shed and Messroom for the Garden staff are taking shape in the Walled Garden. The present Gardeners' Mess will, we hope, soon become an Education Centre for visiting school parties, where up to 50 students will be able to base themselves for the day when visiting both the House and the Estate. We see this as a particularly important project since our current lack of suitable accommodation for coats, lunch bags and somewhere to work and eat, especially in bad weather, definitely discourages schools from visiting the property.

STAFF CHANGES

Congratulations are due to Simon Rumsey, who has been appointed "Custodian" to replace Jim, who resigned for personal reasons in the Spring. A new "House Steward" to fill Simon's post has yet to be appointed.

Pat Rumsey is continuing to deal with Ticket Sales, now operating from the information point in the Stableyard. She is assisted by a salaried recruiter, Geraldine Sheedy.

Sian Evans has joined the staff as Estate Secretary, replacing Lynne, who left at the end of last year.

ILLUSTRATED GUIDE

A new illustrated guide to the house has recently been published by the Trust. This contains a lot of new material, particularly on the history of the various owners of the Property, and a foreword by the Earl of Jersey. Volunteer Room-stewards will already have received a complimentary copy - so that they can be well briefed to answer visitors questions! The guide costs £4.50, and is available from the Information Point in the Stableyard.

VISIT TO MONTACUTE AND LYLES CARY

Mary Barclay

Promptly at 9 a.m. on Monday, 11th April, the Friends and House Volunteers embarked on the trip to Montacute and Lytes Cary. After a brief coffee stop at Amesbury and a delightful drive through the lovely scenery of many counties (including a glimpse of Stonehenge) we arrived at Montacute.

Montacute was built for Sir Edward Phelips and was completed in 1601. It is thought the designer and builder was William Arnold, a Somerset mason, although no doubt Phelips himself played a substantial part in the design. The result is a superb example of an Elizabethan house. Of particular note is the east front with its sense of symmetry. The two surviving pavilions in the balustraded forecourt with their ogee roofs and turrets are a joy to behold.

The interior is quite conventional for the period with the great hall, dining room and parlour on the ground floor, various bedrooms and the library on the first floor and the long gallery with its splendid oriel windows at each end and measuring 172 feet occupying most of the second floor. Unfortunately the ceiling of the gallery is not original, being quite plain and thought to date from about 1800 before then it may have had a tunnel vault ceiling with plasterwork decoration. The display here of National Portrait Gallery paintings depicting figures prominent in British history from Henry VIII to Charles I is particularly fine.

On the first floor is "Lord Curzon's Bedroom" - an interesting connection with Kedleston Hall which was Lord Curzon's family home. In 1915, when he was Lord Privy Seal, he leased Montacute and made various changes there, including installing electric light, redecorating the House and installing a bath within a Jacobean style cupboard in the aforementioned bedroom.

After a most interesting visit we proceeded to Lytes Cary, a 16th Century manor house, the home of the Lyte family for five centuries. We were warmly welcomed by NT stewards, one of whom spoke for a few minutes about the house. On the ground floor is the medieval great hall which boasts an original 15th century fireplace, most of the furniture dating from the 17th century. Then to the oriel room, an adjunct to the hall, and showing that in the early 1500's a separate apartment for eating was considered desirable. Next is the chapel room so called because it has a squint into the chapel. The panelled great parlour is furnished with late 17th and early 18th century furniture. Next to the entrance is a looking glass in a stumpwork frame. The little parlour is smaller and in addition houses a collection of 18th and 19th century glass.

Upstairs we saw the great chamber with a handsome coved and ribbed plasterwork ceiling of 1533 with the arms on Henry VIII displayed in the space below. A large oaken Elizabethan bed and tapestries were also to be viewed.

Finally, we had time for a look in the chapel and a walk around the pleasant gardens before boarding the coach for a short drive to Kingsdon Village Hall, where ex-W.I. members were awaiting our arrival in order to regale us with a tea of scones with jam and cream or cakes. After which we again boarded our coach for the homeward journey with thanks to Jim Tickle, and Barry our driver, for a well organised and safe days excursion. The weather also contributed to the overall pleasure by producing an afternoon of sunshine and summer temperatures despite the cold early morning start from Osterley.

There has to be a good reason for rising early and joining the rush hour crawl in order to catch the 9 a.m. post chaise from Osterley - A VERY good reason is a visit to Wimpole Hall.

Barry, our postilion for the day, whisked us to Cambridgeshire in no time at all, or so it seemed, "Look to the left" said Barry, and there - standing majestically at the end of a 2 mile avenue of well cultivated grass, stood Wimpole Hall.

The house was not yet open but Home Farm was; the John Soane model farm where in the thatched barns we fed bottles of milk to baby goats, saw new born calves, and laughed at chickens wearing feathered pantaloons. Instructions for churning butter in six different ways were to be found in the museum and "guess what you do with this one" would be a good game to play in the old farming implement barn.....THEN we found the piglets, laid out in rows like fat sausages beside their gently snoring matriarch, then more piglets - squealing, scrabbling, guzzling and totally delighting.

It is impossible to give a potted history of Wimpole in one paragraph so suffice it to say that a Wimpole estate has existed since the Middle Ages. The first family of note to acquire the manor was the Chichele family in 1428. In 1642 they backed the wrong horse and fell foul of the Roundheads. Returned to favour after the restoration they spent lavishly on rebuilding the house and, living far beyond their means, in 1686 Sir Francis Chicheley had to sell the whole estate. A number of wealthy owners followed; eventually in 1711 Lord Harley acquired Wimpole and lived there for 30 years spending his, and his wife's fortune on books and works of art which later were sold to repay debts. The estate was sold to Philip Yorke, 1st Earl of Hardwicke in 1740. For the next 150 years the house and park were lovingly cosseted, redesigned, modernised etc. No other house I know of (except perhaps my own) has bankrupted so many owners, encompassed so many tastes and idiosyncrasies and yet still exudes so much warmth wrapped in elegance and beauty.

Unfortunately the love affair between Master and Mansion came to an end with "Champagne Charlie" 5th Earl of Hardwicke who drank and gambled his inheritance away until in 1894 Wimpole was sold together with much of the contents. In 1938 Captain and Mrs George Bambridge bought Wimpole and spent the rest of their lives restoring and replacing. In 1976 Elsie Bambridge bequeathed the house and estate to the National Trust.

And now!...the house!...The first impression is of grandeur. Wimpole was being palladianised by Flitcroft in 1742 just before Osterley was having its face lifted. Twin stone staircases lead up to the front entrance hall which is surprisingly small, warm sand coloured marble columns guard the entrance to the ante chapel on the right. Progress through each room is engrossing, decor is mainly pastel shades and the furniture in the two main living rooms on the South front is that bought by the Bambridge's - English, French and Austrian late 18th and 19th Century pieces. The ceilings, in my opinion, were all wonderful, totally unlike anything we have at Osterley, almost a cross between Chambers and Adam, bolder plasterwork than that of Adam but not as heavy as Chambers.

It would take ten more pages to describe every room in the house so I can dwell only on those that hit me straight between the eyes and top of the list is the Book Room - a sort of annex to the library. Champagne Charlie sold off a good portion of the original library but many works remain, which, together with the collection made by Captain and Mrs Bambridge, formed an enticing and exciting library. The Yellow Drawing Room was a T-shaped room which could be marvellous for a family party with plenty of seating at comfortable talking distance. Next, the Saloon, today we would call this a garden-room, tiled floor and glazed double-doors set in a bay opening out to a set of steps leading down into the formal garden and then, beyond a set of wrought iron gates, a long grass walk up a slight hill to a folly (the Gothic Tower) fabulous view.

Two more areas I must mention - the bath house and the basement. The first was designed in 1792 - imagine a room 12 ft long, 8ft. wide and about 15 ft. high, two curved staircases lead down into the room and in the middle is a sunken pool about 6 ft. deep with shallow steps either side leading down. This pool held 2,199 gallons of water. There is also now a 19th Century shower installed in the Bath House.

Second is the basement especially the Housekeepers Room with a linen cupboard stretching along the whole of one wall containing sheets and embroidered and monogrammed tablecloths. The Dry Store room, accessible only from the Housekeepers room was a treasure trove with real tea chests labelled Lapsang and Peking, smaller painted chests marked Pearl Barley and Tapioca and drawers marked curry, mace, cloves and pepper; this small room showed so clearly how "spices from the East" were prized so highly and were guarded as closely as "My Lord's Wine Cellar".

I have had to leave out so much but I must say that Wimpole Hall and its ground and the Rare Breeds Farm is one of the best National Trust properties that I have ever visited. I thank Jim Tickle for arranging the trip - I would go again any time.

HIDCOTE AND CANONS ASHBY

James Law

On June 2nd a fully booked coach party of friends, volunteers and guests set out from Osterley for a full day's tour to two properties in the Cotswolds. We had a brief stop for refreshments at the new Granada Service Area between Oxford and Banbury. The coach driver then took us along a very scenic route through the countryside to Hidcote Manor in Gloucestershire. The vivid greens of late spring gave the land a particularly attractive hue.

At Hidcote Manor Gardens we made our way round the pleasant series of gardens, all interlinked but with separate plant themes in each section. The walks through each named garden led to the next or gave on to a vista framed by high, clipped hedges. Topiary is a strong feature at Hidcote. The dark greens of box and yew contrast well with the foliage of hornbeam, shrubs and trees. The peonies and allium were probably at their best and looked magnificent massed together. We all enjoyed the variety of plants on show. When it began to rain heavily most of us made our way hastily back to the coach. A visit to Hidcote could be combined with nearby Kiftsgate, also famous for its gardens. We did not have sufficient time for a visit today as Canons Ashby awaited us.

We proceeded to Canons Ashby near Daventry for our visit to the house, church and gardens. This Elizabethan manor has an austere character redolent with history, and, owing to the Dryden family, it has changed little down the ages. The Great Chamber, Winter Parlour, Tapestry Room and the kitchens all seem unchanged by the centuries. The nearby priory church was saved from decay by the Trust and reflects the Puritan faith of the Dryden family. The main garden, known as the Green Court, consists only of a lawn and clipped trees. This property is required viewing for those interested in English history! We enjoyed this foray into past times, concluding another successful day tour.

Thanks of course go to Jim Tickle our organiser and to Barry our driver for making it a splendid day for everyone.

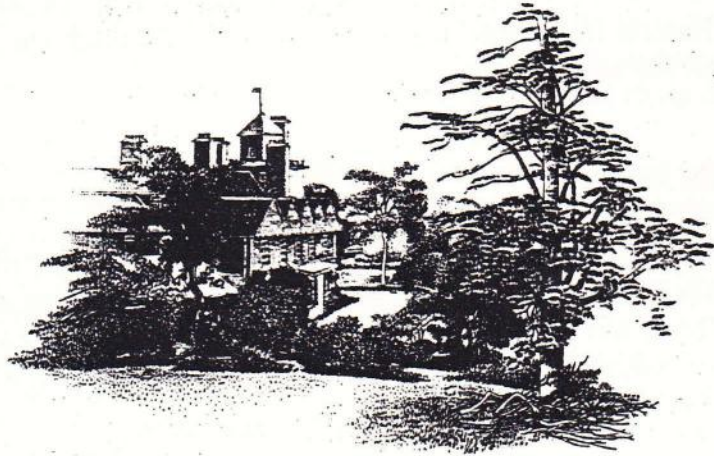
HOUSE AND GARDENS EXCURSIONS 1994

This season's programme has to date proved so popular that the first four excursions were very quickly fully booked, including the July visit to Ightham Mote and Emmet's Garden. Tickets are still available for:
Standen and Nymans Gardens - Wednesday 10th August
Upton House - Monday 5th September
Claydon House - Monday 3rd October

STANDEN AND NYMANS GARDENS - Wednesday 10th August. Leaving Osterley at 12 noon. Cost £6.30

A modest property, by National Trust standards, Standen was built at the end of the nineteenth century by Philip Webb, a close friend of William Morris whose textile and wallpaper designs are a dominant feature of the house. The attractive gardens and woodland walk are most inviting and offer superb views across the beautiful, unspoilt Medway Valley.

Despite the ravages of the storms that wreaked havoc here a few years ago, Nymans has survived as one of the great gardens of the Sussex Weald. There are plants, trees and shrubs from all over the world set around romantic ruins, formal walks, walled and sunken gardens, -- an oasis of mental refreshment and relaxation, just off the Brighton Road!



UPTON HOUSE - Monday 5th September. Leaving Osterley at 9 a.m. Cost £7.70

Friends of Osterley should feel quite at home at Upton House, since it was owned from 1757 by our very own Francis and Robert Child and, through Sarah Sophia Fane, by the Earls of Jersey until 1894. Upton is mentioned in historical records as early as 1199 and the Civil War battle of Edgehill in 1642 was fought only a mile away from the site of the present house, which dates from 1695. Through the generosity of the late Lord Bearsted, who gave the House to the Trust in 1948, Upton presents a veritable treasure-store to the art connoisseur. The collections include paintings by English and Continental Old Masters, Brussels tapestries, Sevres porcelain, Chelsea figures and fine 18th Century furniture. Friends may wish to compare the painting of Upton House by Anthony Devis, hanging in the Luggage Lobby, with our Devis paintings at Osterley. The main garden, planted with herbaceous borders, fruit and vegetables, is impressively set out in terraces. There are also woodland and water gardens and lakes.

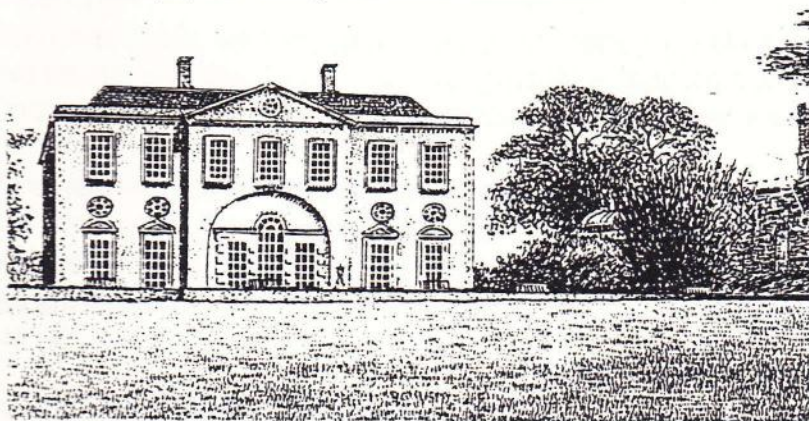


CLAYDON HOUSE - Monday 3rd October. Leaving Osterley at 12 noon. Cost £6.

The present house is an ambitious reconstruction and extension of an old Jacobean manor house, acquired in 1620 by Sir Edmund Verney, who served Charles I and was killed at the battle of Edgehill. One of his sons also died in the Royalist cause and another, who supported Parliament, sought exile in France.

In 1754, Ralph, 2nd Earl Verney embarked upon a vast, extravagant rebuilding scheme that over the next fifteen years was to cost him his entire fortune and that of his wife. Eventually, to escape his creditors, he too had to take flight across the channel. It seems he had initially appointed Luke Lightfoot as architect, but the intervention of Sir Thomas Robinson resulted in quarrels, litigation and finally the dismissal of both architects.

Despite all the setbacks and financial mismanagement, much of value still remains. There is a series of superb rococo staterooms with plasterwork by Joseph Rose, who was associated with Robert Adam. A bedroom and Museum commemorate Florence Nightingale, who was the sister of Parthenope, Lady Verney, and was a frequent guest at Claydon. Curiosities include a Javanese gamelan orchestra and gongs presented to Sir Harry Verney by Stamford Raffles, and an extraordinary "Temple of Asia" in the Chinese Room, a fashion first popularised by Sir William Chambers.



Friends and Volunteers wishing to join any of these excursions are advised to book early to avoid disappointment. To check ticket availability or to obtain extra Booking Forms, you may phone Jim Tickle on 081 894 4174.

FLOWER POWER

Jim Tickle

The May Bank Holiday Plant Stall organised on behalf of Friends of Osterley by Jim Tickle, with contributions from Mr and Mrs. Bryars, Audrey and Ian Conacher and Dudley Foy, added a useful £105 boost to our somewhat depleted funds and raised prospects of repeat events in Summer and Autumn. The financial return, though welcome, was of secondary importance, however, since the Stall was conceived originally to establish a Friends' presence in the stable yard and perhaps attract a few new members and Volunteers.

If you are interested in contributing ideas or saleable goods, or helping out in any similar events this Season, (even a bric-a-brac or White Elephant stall has been suggested, provided that it doesn't compete with our newly opened NT shop!), please contact Jim on 081 894 4174 or Ian on 081 560 8523. Friends need to be seen to exist; to prosper, we need to be seen!

EVENTS AT OSTERLEY - SUMMER 1994

The Annual Summer Band Concert will be given on Saturday, 6th August, by the world famous **SYD LAWRENCE ORCHESTRA** with their 1940's Big Band Sound. Dress in period costume if you can - dig out your demob suit or your A-line dress out of the back of the wardrobe - or come as you are, with picnic, seating and dancing shoes! The show will finish with a firework display.

Gates open at 6.30 pm - performance starts at 7.30 pm.

Tickets in advance: - Adult £12, Child £6, Family £28.

From National Trust Box Office,
P.O. Box 180, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP14 4XT

Cheques - payable to "National Trust Enterprises Ltd".
please enclose a stamped addressed envelope.
Credit card bookings: - 0494 522234

Tickets on the day - if any remain - £15 - no reductions.

SHAKESPEARE AT OSTERLEY - SEPTEMBER 3rd & 4th

For full details of these exciting performances, see the Booking form enclosed with this Newsletter.

FAMILY DAY - SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 25th.

Activities and events for all the Family in the Park, including displays by local groups, sideshows, children's painting competition, orienteering trail, walks, and many more!

FREE ADMISSION DAY - WEDNESDAY, 14th SEPTEMBER.

Free entry to the House - but NOT the Car Park - for non-members.

CHRISTMAS CAROLS IN THE STABLEYARD.

It is hoped that we can arrange carol-singing in December, at a weekend when the new shop will be open for you to buy your Christmas goodies - details in our Winter issue, to be published in November.

OVERDUE SUBSCRIPTIONS

At the last count, there are still nearly a hundred members who have not paid their subscriptions for 1994-5. If you have not yet renewed, please hasten to do so, as we shall be unable to send any further Newsletters to lapsed members.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

Barry has urgent need of further Volunteers, as Room Stewards, and to join the team of Gardeners, growing flowers for the House. Contact him on 081 560 3918 if you are interested. There is also a need for helpers with the "Batricar" Service, making these vehicles available to the less-mobile visitor to the Park. Contact either Barry or Dudley Foy, on 081 570 8900.