



# The Friends of Osterley Park



*A Supporters Group for the National Trust*

Issue 23

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 1996

*Progress and Prospects*

*Ian Conacher*

The Annual General Meeting on 8th October was in large part a social occasion, as members gathered to chat over a glass of wine before the formal business began.

Your Committee were able to report on a very satisfactory situation. We finished the year 1995-6 with a substantial balance in hand, which has been added to during the first half of the current year. This has been achieved partly from subscriptions but also from the support given by members to the lectures and excursions. In return, we have been able to hold private social functions for members, to share a bottle or two of wine, and to have privileged views of exhibitions at the House.

I believe that membership of the "Friends" is beginning to give value for money - not just in the privileges it brings, but also in the opportunities it provides for social contact, and for gaining an insight into the philosophy of the Trust in managing change at the Property.

Your Committee are now faced with a number of challenges; firstly, we must look at ways of increasing our membership so that we can build on the progress already made.

Secondly, we must look at our activities, to see how these can be developed in the future, so that we can continue to combine providing a service to members and the public with a little painless fundraising!

Thirdly, we must consider how the funds we have raised can best be spent. In the past, these have largely been devoted to the provision of facilities for the less-mobile visitor. There is, however, a strong feeling in the Committee that we should widen the scope of our support to other areas, including the purchase of items for the House.

Barry Williams had recently confided to the Committee that the "stair-climber" which was purchased after the "Friends" appeal in 1993, had not lived up to expectations, partly because of the physical demands made on the operator, and also because shortcomings in the quality of the ride made some visitors reluctant to use it.

We were told that a new machine is now on the market, which would apparently overcome many of the problems with the existing model. The Committee were agreed that this would need to be very fully evaluated before any decision could be taken

about including it in our spending plans.

Our position on this was explained to members when the matter was raised from the floor at the A.G.M.

Much thought will need to be given to the allocation of funds in the coming weeks; it may be that the solution will resemble the "Judgement of Solomon"!

The meeting closed with a short talk by Barry Williams, highlighting the challenges posed by incorporating the farm land acquired by the Trust earlier this year into the Trust's holding at Osterley.

The House has now closed for the Winter; however, we have several activities planned for the next few months. Details of the Carol Concerts in the Stable-yard, and of the "Winter Lectures" are given on other pages.

May I close by wishing all members a very happy Christmas, and good health and good fortune in the New Year.

#### *Winter Lectures 1997*

We have been very fortunate in securing the services of some interesting speakers for the 1997 season of talks in St. Mary's Parish Hall, Osterley, this winter.

Many members who are also Room Stewards at Osterley will already know Anthea Palmer, the Trust's Regional Historic Buildings Adviser, based at Regional Headquarters at Hughenden. Over the past six years, since the Trust took over direct management of the Property from the Victoria and Albert Museum, she has been responsible for overseeing research into the history of the buildings, and incorporating the results of this into the changes which have been made in the House, most apparent in the redecoration of the Library and Long Gallery.

Anthea is due to give a lecture at the Royal Institute of British Architects in late January, entitled *Osterley House and Park: Reunification, the last five years*. We are very fortunate in having persuaded her to give us a preview of this on Wednesday, 15th January. We are hoping for a large audience for this - book early, as seating is limited!

Members of the Isleworth Probus Club already know Chris Howkins as a talented and amusing after-dinner speaker. Chris is a naturalist and author, and has illustrated and published a number of books on various aspects of natural history, including the place of trees and plants in myth and folklore. He will speak to us on Wednesday, 29th January on *Trees and Charcoal Burning* - a subject of topical interest with the drive towards a return to traditional methods of woodland management and the growing pressure to replace imported charcoal with material produced from sustainable sources within the U.K.

Andrea Cameron needs no introduction to those who have attended our talks over the last five years. Head of the Archive Library for the London Borough of Hounslow, and President of the Hounslow Historical Society, she presents well-researched material, illustrated by slides. As part of her professional life, she is currently concerned with

the restoration of part of the ground floor of Boston Manor House, which will be opened to the public next Spring. This house has many links with the owners of Osterley, and its history will form the subject of her talk on Wednesday 19th February.

The fourth talk will be given by Harry Gordon-Slade, on 5th March, 1997. He is a retired architect, and former Inspector of Ancient Monuments with the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission in Scotland. His specialities are the castles, medieval churches and vernacular buildings of Scotland. He will be talking to us about Scottish Architecture, and in particular the work of Robert Adam and his family in Scotland.

All talks will begin at 8 p.m. and will be followed by coffee and biscuits at 9.15. Tickets for each talk cost £3 or £10 for the series of four, and can be obtained in advance from Ian Conacher, using the booking form enclosed with this Newsletter. Tickets will be available at the door - provided there are any left!

*"Water, Water Everywhere" - Except the South and East!*

Followers of the weather news will no doubt have noted that the drought conditions of 1995 have not been repeated nationwide this year. There have been no reports of hosepipe bans in Yorkshire, or pictures of cracked mud around the margins of reservoirs supplying the large northern towns.

However, in the South-East, conditions have been as bad or worse than last year. Osterley Park has been particularly badly affected; last year's dry summer was followed by a winter of less than normal rainfall, which did not replenish the water table. This had already been lowered by the excavation of the cutting for the M4 in the 1960's.

Many of us using the Park 30 years ago will recall that the ditch, running from the north east corner of the walled garden around the edge of the fields beyond the woodland, was full of water and wildlife in the spring months. This ditch drained the run-off from the fields and fed the water into the west end of the garden lake; it is now dry throughout the year.

Without this supply, the water levels in this lake have been about two feet below the level of the outfall for some weeks past, and the level in the middle lake is also falling. Hopefully, in the coming winter, rainfall will be sufficient to improve the situation for next summer.

We have heard reports that terrapins have been seen in the garden lake; presumably these are pet animals that have been returned to the wild, rather than the results of a natural response to changing conditions in the climate!

### *New Buggy for the Park Wardens*

Most members will have seen Nathalie and her team of Wardens patrolling the Park in their fleet of Golf Buggies. These have proved their worth in allowing a rapid response to any incident, and in providing a highly visible mobile information and assistance point.

A new vehicle is now in service, donated by Richmond National Trust Association. This was presented to Osterley by their Chairman, Stephen Bennett, at a ceremony in October.

### *Summer Events*

Preparations are already being made for next summer's events. Barry is planning a *Community Week*, from 12th to 20th July, which will draw on the talents of local artists and craft workers; the "Friends" will be assisting with the presentation of this.

The week will commence with a Community Day on Saturday 12th. This will be followed by a variety of events during the following week, culminating in the Open-Air Theatre performances in the Stable-Yard on Saturday and Sunday, 19th & 20th.

### *The Rivals Reconvene!*

This was the heading for a recent article in the *Daily Telegraph*, describing two exhibitions currently running in London.

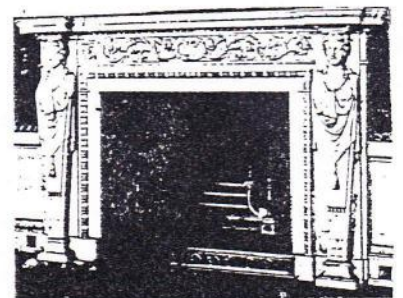
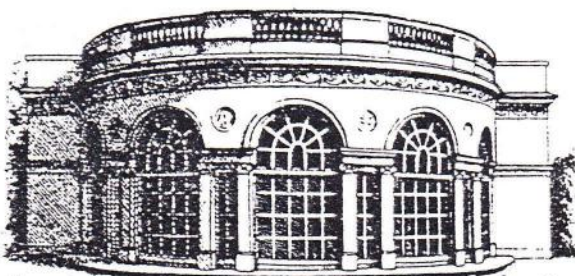
One celebrates the work of *Sir William Chambers, Architect to George III* and is held in the Courtauld Gallery in Somerset House, which Chambers designed. This runs to January 5th, 1997.

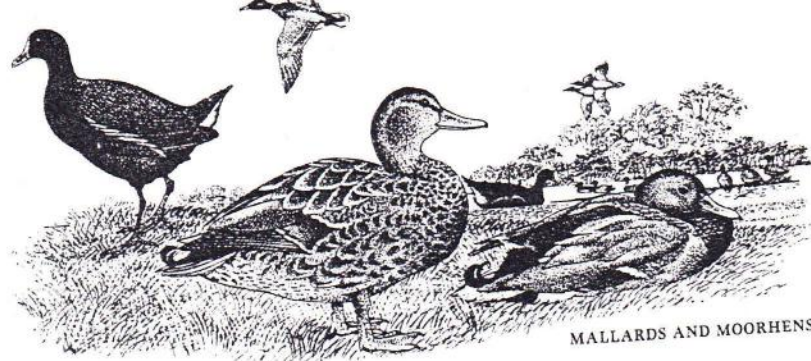
The other, *Robert Adam - the Creative Mind*, is a display of his drawings at the Soane Museum, in Lincoln's Inn, until March 1st, 1997. (Francis Child's townhouse was in Lincoln's Inn).

The Telegraph article describes Adam as "the talented chancer whose building sometimes ran 100% over budget", and tells the story of the rivalry between him and Chambers, beginning when they met in Italy in the 1750's.

It concludes that while Chambers was an able if somewhat pedestrian designer, astute enough to obtain patronage for commissions for public buildings, Adam was never successful in obtaining such work, although he is now widely remembered for the style which he created. He is the only British architect for whom a style is named.

Your editor visited both exhibitions and was disappointed to find no illustration of Adam's work at Osterley, although buildings and designs which were never created were selected for exhibition. This was a sad omission since Osterley has fine examples of Adam's work. Recent research has shown that William Chambers was not directly involved at Osterley, although the chimney pieces in the Long Gallery were carved by Joseph Wilton to a Chambers design - we here illustrate the delightful Adam Garden House and the Chambers fireplace to prove our point!





*Wildfowl Counts in Osterley Park*

*Patricia Barrett*

Regular walkers in the Park may have spotted two of the species "Greater Spotting Wildfowl" doing their monthly check. They can be recognised by the binoculars round the neck and a green clipboard. Another marked characteristic is a head bent to the left to read letters on the blue rings of another more common species, the Canada Goose. They (myself and Joan Crawford) are both members of The London Natural History Society and Friends of Osterley.

Several years ago the inner London Boroughs were alarmed by the massive increase in numbers of Canada geese on the ponds and lakes of their municipal parks and asked The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust to assist in controlling the situation. There followed a system of ringing the geese' legs with a blue Darvic band showing a distinctive three letter identification to monitor their movements. To build up a total picture, all other wildfowl were also counted bi-monthly. The London Natural History Society was asked to help widen the scope of this survey and its members spent from 1994 onwards counting all wildfowl on lakes, ponds and rivers across the whole of Greater London. The London Lakes Rehabilitation Project as it was called, was really to help inner areas such as Battersea Park Lake, the Serpentine and the Round Pond. It was found in the main that Canada geese do not stray far from their original site of ringing. A scheme to prevent them finding new attractive breeding sites by removing suitable cover, habitat etc. and erecting low fences round the islands and areas used during the moulting season have been suggested as interim measures together with trying to dissuade the public from feeding the birds. (Egg pricking and removal is very labour intensive so not very practical).

In 1996, the bi-monthly count ceased in the outer areas. However, the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust helps to organise the Wetland Birds Survey (WeBS) for the whole of the country. It is the largest and most comprehensive scheme of its kind in the world and monitors waterfowl to provide data for their conservation. So the two "Greater Spotting Wildfowl" can still be observed counting all the birds on the upper and lower lakes and the pond in the field near Osterley Lane. They still report all the Darvic rings, many of the original birds are seen regularly. They see Great Crested Grebes (and hear their noisy offspring), Herons, Swans, Mallard and Tufted Ducks, Moorhens, Coots, Blackheaded Gulls, Canada Geese, Mandarin Ducks, and a Red Crested Pochard every month and in season, Cormorants and Shovellers. They keep their eyes peeled for Kingfishers, visiting geese, other wildfowl and waders. Numbers remain fairly constant with Mallards and Canada Geese in greatest numbers. During August, 1996, with the temperature around 28 degrees C, 110 Canada Geese were counted under the cedar trees, panting and with sore feet. The water levels became incredibly low. There was a marked reduction in the numbers of coots as the year progressed, it will be interesting to see if this is permanent.

The "Greater Spotting Wildfowl" are very approachable and will always try to assist with any bird watching query. However, please do not surprise them when they are perched on a slippery slope with the binoculars raised to eyes.

Faringdon & Buscot Park

Wednesday 10th July

A lovely morning with clear blue skies that stayed with us all day. At Faringdon a pub lunch or picnic in the church garden before a quiet stroll through this little country town was the prelude to Buscot Park. A "fast hike" was all the time we could spare through the ever surprising pleasure gardens, through the rose swinging garden, so called because of the old fashioned wooden swing chairs, along the white herbaceous border to the top of the canal walk, over the miniature humpback bridge spanning brook-sized cascades and fountains down to the lake - breathtaking!

If you are an art lover you really must visit Buscot, rooms filled with not just beautiful furniture, but pictures, paintings from present and past artists including Rembrandt, Van Dyck, Graham Sutherland and Peter Greenham - whatever your taste, there is a work of art over which to drool. I stood a full half hour in the Saloon, I was lost wandering through *The Legend of the Briar Rose*, painted by my favourite artist, Burne Jones on every wall in the room like fantastic wallpaper. I think I did see the Reynolds, the Rubens and the Breughel but as a transcendental Pre-Raphaelite I was floating on cloud nine!

Ely & Oxburgh Hall

Monday 5th August

I had to admit that this day was HOT; entering the coolness of Ely Cathedral was a relief but the spinal shivers however, were evoked by the glorious thundering tones of the organ sweeping through the church (someone had told them that I was coming?) - what a welcome! and what a beautiful Cathedral from the wood carvings of the choir stalls, the reflected rainbows from the octagon tower windows, the carved angels and the ceiling of the Nave, built in Norman times and panelled and painted during Victoria's reign. The stained glass museum, the cloisters, the monastic buildings too much to see in too little time and too few words to describe. Oxburgh Hall was a complete contrast, a medieval moated manor house complete with battlements, crenellations and (a new one on me) machicolations - these are open brackets beneath the windows from which 'objects' can be dropped on unwelcome visitors (food for thought when redecorating the front porch!!) In 1487 Henry VII visited the house so many of the rooms retain the Tudor furnishings and fittings but the house has remained in the Bedingfeld family since the 15th Century and each generation has left its mark up to neo-classicism and finally Victorian. Two heirlooms of great interest are the celebrated Marian Needlework hangings worked by Mary Queen of Scots and the Countess of Shrewsbury and in the Queen's Room the fascinating Sheldon Tapestry Map - which includes a picture of Osterley in 1647 when it was owned by the Stanhope family and occupied by Bridget Stanhope and her husband the 2nd Earl of Desmond.

Stratford-upon-Avon & Hanbury Hall

Monday 2nd September

Running out of space I must leave Stratford to your memories or your imagination. I did find something new on this trip, after being winched across the river on a very small ferry we found a butterfly farm where I personally walked around for a full ten minutes with a butterfly with a 6" wing span happily sitting on my shoulder. I'm sure

he would have stayed longer but I pushed him off because he was tickling my face. In Hanbury Hall a certain member of our party was allowed to entertain us with a tune on the chamber organ in the great entrance hall. Dark oak panelling and William and Mary furniture give this house a welcoming invitation to warmth and comfort. The family must have been very musical for one room was used as a music room with a magnificent grand piano (Jim was not allowed to play this one). Painted ceilings and walls especially around the staircase are very fine and properly imposing. Home to the Vernon family for five centuries it has been cherished and is indeed a lovely home to visit.

Bath & Dyrham Park

Tuesday, 1st October

I personally know Bath so well that I bypassed the Assembly Rooms. The Pump Room and Roman Baths and even the Cathedral only got a quick head poke (to hear if the organ was playing!). I had shopping to do - pastry cutters from Kitchens, the most comprehensive kitchen equipment shop in the country, and some Cathedral Cheddar from the most pungently mouthwatering cheese shop in the world. We did have a quick stroll around the Royal Crescent and through the gardens back to the river where, as it was my birthday, we bypassed Sally Lunn's Teashoppe and celebrated instead with a champagne picnic lunch on a bench on the banks of the Avon in the warm October sunshine - lovely!

Dyrham Park, once a Tudor House was completely transformed and rebuilt in the 17th Century by William Blathwayt who married the heiress of Dyrham in 1686. Blathwayt was Secretary of State to William of Orange so there is strong Dutch influence throughout the house reflected not only in the furniture and painting but the grand collection of delftware vases, dishes, urns, jardinières, oval bowls and circular baskets and the notable pyramid tulip vases. Most memorable for me were two pictures by Samuel van Hoogstraeten, his perspective is quite staggering, one picture just called 'perspective view' of the courtyard of a house is, I think quite beautiful, the other picture is painted on the wall at the end of a corridor. Painted in 1662 the frame is a doorway and the picture set into the doorway is an illusionist perspective painting of a corridor complete with more doorways, dogs and even a broom propped against the wall, as you walk away from the picture and keep looking back it just seems like a long continuation of the corridor in which you are walking. The Park complete with fallow deer, is enchanting and close by the house is Dyrham Church, the parish church of St. Peter, which is well worth a visit.

We all wish to thank Jim Tickle for arranging another splendid season of exciting trips. A great time was had by all!

Jim is already engaged in preparing his itinerary for next session. It is hoped that this will include visits to Uppark, Knole, and the Theatre Royal at Bury St. Edmunds.

Several Members have expressed a wish to visit Waddesdon; this could possibly be combined with Ascott, another Rothschild property.

Most of the Trust's properties within range have already been visited - we may need to widen our scope to include English Heritage houses!

# MERRY CHRISTMAS



## Christmas Opening

*The National Trust Shop at Osterley will be open from 1st November to 22nd December from Wednesday to Sunday, between 12 noon and 4 pm. for Christmas shoppers.*

*It is hoped to arrange a special evening opening for disabled shoppers, who will be able to park in the Stable-Yard, for further details ring the shop on 0181 232-8188*

*The Tea-Room will be open during November and December on Saturdays and Sundays; in November it will also be open from Wednesday to Friday, if the weather is fine enough to attract visitors to the Park!*

*On weekdays in December, pre-booked parties can enjoy a Christmas lunch served in the Old Brewhouse Restaurant, adjacent to the Stable-yard Tea Room. For details of menus and prices please ring Jacky on 0181 569-7624.*

*To support these ventures, the electric Courtesy Bus will be running on demand between the car-park and the stable-yard.*

## Carols in the Stable-Yard

*Once again, as Christmas approaches, the "Friends" have asked local choirs to lead the singing of Carols in the Stable-Yard at Osterley.*

*On Sunday, 8th December, between 3 & 4 p.m. singers from the West London Opera will be led by Tony Underwood.*

*On December 15th, at the same time, Howard Stephens will lead the St. Mary's Singers.*

*On both days, the "Friends" will be collecting for the Battery Vehicle Maintenance Fund. Most members will know that we have taken on the responsibility for the ongoing maintenance costs of the self-drive cars available to the less-mobile visitor to the Park; this year, these costs have been particularly heavy.*

