



# The Friends of Osterley Park



## *A Supporters Group for the National Trust*

Issue 24

NEWSLETTER

February 1997

### *Restoring Osterley's Park - An invitation from Barry Williams.*

We were delighted to report in last Spring's edition of the Newsletter the purchase by the National Trust of 153 acres of Osterley Park Farm, which formed part of the original outer park at Osterley. The acquisition of this land was made possible by a generous grant of £825,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund, while the National Trust made up the remainder of the £1.1 million purchase cost, plus an endowment for the future upkeep of the land, from Osterley Park's own reserves.

There is further good news, since the 62 acres of farmland south of the M4 motorway which still remained in private hands was acquired towards the end of last year by the National Trust.

These two important acquisitions will prevent forever development on a great part of Osterley's original park and will enable the National Trust, in the long term, to restore some of the parkland character to this unique green space which has miraculously survived in London's urban sprawl.

Over the past six months the Trust has been developing ideas for conservation and restoration of the new land and these will form the basis of an *Ideas for Osterley* exhibition which will be on display in the Stableyard Information Point when the House re-opens to visitors on the Wednesday before Easter.

The exhibition will be previewed during February and arrangements have been made for the "Friends" to join a *Private View* on the afternoon of *Friday 21st February between 2 - 4.30pm. Please park in the main car park (there will be no charge) and walk up to the Stableyard. The exhibition will be clearly signposted.*

### *Other News from the Trust.*

Those members who know Simon Rumsey, the Custodian at the House, will be sorry to learn that, after a long period of sick leave, he has resigned from that post. Our good wishes go with him for the future. It is hoped that his successor will be in post by the beginning of March.

The cold weather had an unfortunate effect in the Stable Block, where a burst pipe led to flooding of the shop, with some damage to stock.

In the House, the Grand Staircase has been redecorated. New stands for the Chinese jars in the Long Gallery are being fabricated to eighteenth century designs, and will hopefully be in place when the House re-opens on March 26th. The cost of these stands is approximately £2000, and is being funded by the "Friends".

### *Summer Events*

The Summer season begins on Saturday, July 5th, with an open-air production of Sheridan's *The Rivals*, performed in the Pleasure Grounds in front of the Temple of Pan, by a company who are touring National Trust properties.

12 - 20th July is *Community Week* - a series of activities featuring particularly individuals and groups from the immediate vicinity of the Park. Details of the programme are listed in the *News Release* from the Trust enclosed with this Newsletter.

The Annual Band Concert will be given this year on August 9th by the *Glenn Miller Band* followed by fireworks!

### *Bric-a-Brac*

In past years, "Friends" have generously supported our "Bric-a-Brac" stall with donations of unwanted gifts, costume jewellery etc. We hope to run such a stall on *Community Day*, July 12th, so please start now to put together suitable items. Details of arrangements for collection will be given in our next issue.

### *'Friends' Events*

Jim Tickle is currently preparing his programme and itinerary for the Summer Visits. We hope to include details of these on a separate sheet, with a booking form. We are planning also to have a reception and *Private View* of one of the Exhibitions in the West Range - details in our next issue!

### *Planting for the 'Friends'*

On 18th May, when the Trust is hoping that a *Spring Plant Fair* will be organised at many Properties, the "Friends" and the Ealing N.T.A. will both be running plant stalls in the Park, stocked by our respective members.

Can we appeal now to all "Friends" with green fingers and greenhouses or other suitable space, to sow bedding plants for sale on that day. Space is being made available in the poly-tunnel in the walled garden to receive these prior to the day, and this area can also be used by members for potting-on from seed trays, which will ease the problem of bringing plants to site ready potted.

The "Friends" plant stall, pioneered in recent years by Jim Tickle, will, we hope, be set up again as usual over the following Bank Holiday weekend, and thereafter as long as stocks last. If members are able to make successional sowings - or if their offerings are too late for sale on the 18th - then we shall still be able to dispose of them!

### *Winter Lectures*

The first of these, on 15th January, attracted a large audience to hear Anthea Palmer give us a preview of the talk which she was to deliver the following week at the R.I.B.A. Her well-prepared talk, illustrated with slides on twin screens, was aimed at an audience less familiar than ourselves with Osterley, but nevertheless provided new facets of the Trust's work and intentions - notable among which is the prospect of a

horse-drawn wagonette to give visitors an impression of the eighteenth century approach to the House from Osterley Lane!

We hope to have a similar audience for Chris Howkins on 29th January. The remaining talks are:-

19th February - Andrea Cameron - *Boston Manor House*

5th March - Harry Gordon Slade - *Scottish Architecture and Robert Adam*

Talks are in St. Mary's Parish Hall, Osterley Road, at 8 pm.  
Tickets for both of these will be available at the door.

### *A Weekly Hoe and a Chat*

An article by Lesley Orton in the Regional Volunteers' *Link Magazine*, under the above heading, described the work which she and her team of volunteers do in order to provide fresh flowers each week during the opening season, for decoration in the House. Another team picks and arranges the flowers each week.

As the headline shows, these activities are not only work sessions but also social gatherings. Further volunteers are needed to strengthen the teams - please contact the House on 0181 560-3918 to offer your assistance.

### *More Volunteers Wanted!*

In addition to Gardeners and Flower Arrangers, volunteers are also wanted to give a couple of afternoons a month, as Room Stewards in the House. These will fill gaps in the present team and enable additional rooms to be included on the visitor route.

"Mobility Volunteers" driving the Courtesy Bus or making the self-drive battery cars available to the less-mobile visitor to the park, are also needed.

Both types of work bring volunteers in contact with the public, giving job satisfaction, and also bring social contacts with other volunteers - ideal for the recently retired who miss contact with colleagues in the workplace. Full training will be given; any "Friend" or friend of a "Friend" - interested should contact the House on 0181 560-3918

### *The Hounds of Spring*

*Ian Conacher*

The spell of hard weather over Christmas and early January has, as I write, given way to bright winter days, with rosy dawns and colourful sunsets.

During the cold weather, both the Garden and lower lakes in the Park were frozen over, and Estate staff were to be seen breaking the ice around the edges to discourage dogs and children from venturing on to the treacherous surface. Early in the New Year during the school holidays, walking around the park with the grandchildren we met a family of swans, who, with other birds, were keeping open a stretch of water south of the island in the lower lake, and competing with Canada geese for the children's breadcrumbs.

The Garden lake, in particular, is still well below its normal level. The rains of November gave only a slight improvement, and it must be hoped that the month will live up to its country name of "February Fillydyke"!

The brighter weather and lengthening days have brought a renewal of bird song to my garden. In particular, Great Tits have been heard trying out their distinctive territorial calls. Both in my garden and in the Park, jays have frequently been seen - to the point where one wonders whether they are going through a similar population explosion to that of the magpie.

One feature of the weather over the past year has been the prevalence of easterly winds, made more noticeable by their effect on aircraft movements. When the wind is in the west, planes landing at Heathrow pass over my home every few minutes; with east winds, the noise of departing flights is less obtrusive here - although not in Osterley Park, where the House is under the flightpath! Is this a random change, or is the partial loss of our prevailing south-westerlies related to major climate changes such as global warming?

*Copy Wanted!*

This issue has been put together in haste, to meet the deadline imposed by the invitation to the display on 21st February. It would make life much easier for our Editor and type-setter, Margaret Friday, if she had a flow of contributions from members which could be set up in advance on disc and printed when required. Reminiscences of Osterley in the past, nature notes, and any other material of interest to our members would be welcome!

Chairman:

Ian Conacher, 45, Wood Lane, Isleworth, TW7 5EF 0181 560-8523

Editor:

Margaret Friday, 57, Garrick Close, Ealing, W5 1AT 0181 991-0593

