



The Friends of Osterley Park



A Supporters Group for the National Trust

Issue 26

NEWSLETTER

September 1997

Chairman's Notes

Ian Conacher

This edition of the Newsletter contains the Agenda and other papers for our Annual General Meeting on 21st October. Once again, we plan to spend the minimum time on the necessary business, sweetening the occasion with a glass of wine before the meeting and a talk from Barry Williams to follow. We look forward to seeing many "Friends" at this event.

This has been a busy summer for all involved at the Property; the level of activity has been as great - or greater than - that produced in Centenary Year. Many of the new events held this year are likely to be repeated in years to come, although hopefully not concentrated into so short a period!

The "Friends", whether as individual volunteers or assisting with "Friends" sponsored activities, have contributed to the success of these events. For myself and those involved, these have been enjoyable occasions. We hope that others will come to join the team!

Hyper-active Summer!

Ian Conacher

As I write these notes, heavy rain is falling; according to the T.V. weatherman, this is traditional on August Bank Holiday Monday. What is unusual is the extraordinary sequence of fine weather which we have enjoyed for all the outdoor events at Osterley this year.

This began with the Spring Plant Fair on 18th May. Organised by the Trust as a National event, stalls were set up by Ealing N.T.A., the "Friends", and the Trust members who had responded to a call to grow plants for the day. These were supported by stands from 3 local Nurseries. Trading was brisk, and resulted in a total profit for the benefit of the Property of over £1,000.

Jim Tickle carried on the good work over the following Bank Holiday weekend, with sales of his own plants raising over £165 for the "Friends".

An open-air performance of Sheridan's *The Rivals* was given in the Pleasure Grounds on Saturday, July 5th, by the ReCREATION Theatre Company, and this is reviewed elsewhere in this issue.

Community Week at Osterley

Community Fun Week ran from 12th to 20th July - a week of concentrated effort for staff and volunteers at Osterley - including members of the "Friends" Committee. It began with Fun Day on Saturday 12th, when the lawn and stable-yard were filled with all manner of stalls - coconut shies, fencing displays, demonstrations by the police, and many more. The "Friends" were represented by a "Bric-a-brac" stall, run by Audrey Conacher, with help on the day from Audrey Ebison, Margaret Friday, and Felicity Bernstein. Thanks to the generosity of those who gave gifts for the stall, this succeeded in raising £260 for the "Friends".

Local Artists Exhibit at Osterley

During the week, an Exhibition of work by local societies and artists was staged in the West Range of the ground floor of the house. This included paintings from Isleworth & Syon school, Heston Art Group, and by John Stacey, a volunteer recruiter, well known as a courtesy bus driver.

An impressive display of embroidery was shown by members of St. Mary's Church, Osterley. Harold Rogers showed displays of the art of bell-ringing, and displays were also mounted by the West Middlesex Postcard Collectors' Club.

Sunday, 13th July, was the day for Pictures in the Park, when local artists hung their work on the railings. All the space from the causeway at the end of the lake to the gate by the gardeners' cottage was fully occupied, mostly by work of a very high standard. Among those exhibiting was Melanie Venes, who was demonstrating hand weaving techniques and displaying her work. Melanie will be remembered for the talk she gave to the "Friends" as one of our Winter Lectures in 1996.

Covent Garden Minuet Dancers at Osterley

On the evening of Tuesday, July 15th, the Covent Garden Minuet Dancers gave a display of 18th century dance in the courtyard of the House. This was well received, and became quite lively when, after a glass of wine in the interval, members of the audience were invited to participate!

Peter Pan - Illyria for Children

Wednesday, 16th brought a sell-out performance of *Peter Pan* for children, by a Company from the Illyria group.

The Magic Flute - West London Opera

Tony Underwood brought members of his West London Opera group to Osterley on Friday, 18th, for a performance for children of excerpts from *The Magic Flute*. This was given on the steps of the House, and was much enjoyed, although by a smaller audience than had been hoped for.

The Tempest - Illyria at Osterley

Saturday, 19th and Sunday 20th, saw two performances of *The Tempest* by another company from Illyria, in the stable-yard. The first of these had almost a full house, but attendance on the Sunday was down, possibly due to the repeat of *Pride and Prejudice* on T.V. that evening!

Glenn Miller Band Concert & Fireworks

Then came a welcome break before the next major event, the Glenn Miller Band Concert on Saturday, 9th August. This was attended by over 3,500 visitors, who spread themselves over the lawn, many with elaborate picnics - chairs, tables with fine linen, candelabra, etc. Here again, much input was required from estate staff - erecting marquees, dismantling the fence in front of the House, etc. and also from volunteers, stewarding in the car parks, selling admission tickets at the gate, and, on the lawn, selling tickets for the Instant Raffle. This last raised over £1,000 for the benefit of the Property - largely due to the generosity of the public, who kept pressing £5 notes into our hands!

The music followed the familiar pattern - hits from the 1940's, with the classic Glenn Miller orchestration. The area in front of the steps was soon crowded with couples, dancing energetically, many in 40's dress. The evening concluded with a magnificent display of fireworks on the east meadow, with the orchestra playing *In the Mood* as their finale. Altogether a glorious event - a warm summer evening, a colourful sunset, and even a new moon above the backdrop of the House!

One enchanted evening - The Rivals

Margaret Friday

The weather was perfect. We picnicked on the lawns adjacent to the Adam Garden House admiring the colourful flowerbeds. The play began at 7 o'clock - a delightful eighteenth century comedy exposing the humour of the young and in love -surrounded by the machinations of their parents and guardians especially Mrs Malaprop! All parts were performed by four talented players and a young man on the guitar. We drank champagne and chuckled at the delightful lines in Sheridan's perceptive drama. This was a truly splendid evening made perfect by the unique ambience of Osterley.

The Tempest reviewed

Ian Conacher

For the fourth season of *Shakespeare in the Stableyard*, it was felt that a change of Company was desirable. The Albion Company had many virtues, but their contract with the Royal Parks to give free performances last year at local venues including Richmond and Bushey Parks caused some embarrassment.

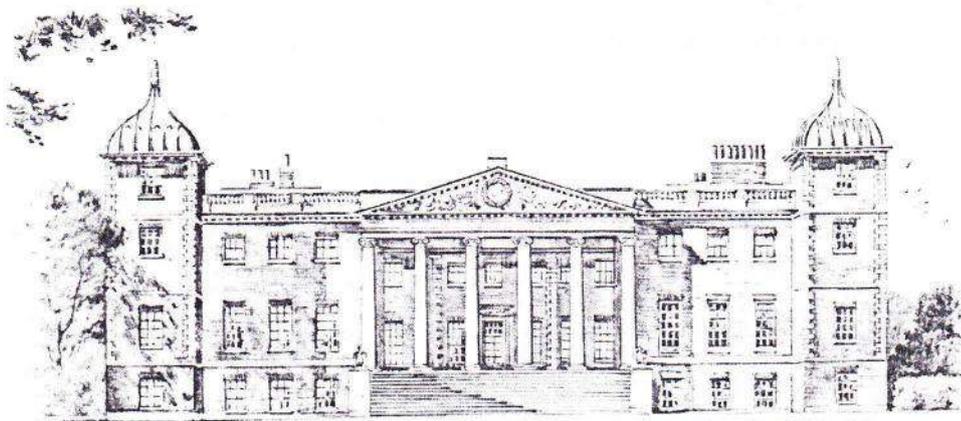
After some discussion at the end of last year with Rebecca Burton, the Trust's Events Organiser at Hughenden, it was decided to engage a Company from Illyria - not the mythical setting for *Twelfth Night*, but an organisation putting several touring groups on the road each season.

I had heard that their approach to Shakespeare was "different", but was not quite prepared for the reality of their performance of *The Tempest*. The Company was made up of five actors, working around a simple island set close to the front row of seating. These five between them took all the parts, changing costumes unobtrusively at the side of the stage.

At first, one was rather sceptical about the ability of the performers to sustain the illusion, but as the play progressed one became more and more ready to suspend disbelief. The actors not only put on different clothes but also different personalities for each part. Of course, to carry off this interpretation demanded a great deal of skill and enthusiasm from the Company - which was there in abundance!

Particularly memorable was Marcus Fernando, who doubled the parts of Prospero, Trinculo the jester, and the Ship's Captain. As the jester, he indulged in a great deal of ad-libbing, apparently customary in the Elizabethan theatre. He included references to the aircraft noise, which was very intrusive that night, and wandered among the audience indulging in repartee.

Illyria claim that their interpretation of Shakespeare's plays, as performed by touring companies in Elizabethan times, is close to the original. It differs strongly from those based on scholarly evaluation of every syllable of the text by pundits such as John Dover Wilson, whose theories were required reading for School Certificate in the 1940's. Certainly the performance was very lively and highly entertaining; one would welcome the chance to see other productions of this Company.



— OSTERLEY PARK HOUSE —

News from The House

Sally Rogers has settled into her position as Custodian of the House. Among her early responsibilities has been supervision of the shipping out of the chairs and settees from the Long Gallery for re-upholstery. The chairs look very good in their new green covers, which tone well with the newly decorated walls. The full effect will be seen when the settees return from the upholsterer.

The new bases for the Chinese jars in the Long Gallery - funded by the "Friends" - have also been delivered, and add to the imposing stature of these pieces.

We welcome Susan Marriage, who has replaced Jenny Dadd as House Steward, As with all new arrivals, we have twisted her arm for a contribution to this issue - see page 6.

Jenny has moved to a job with the National Heritage Memorial Fund. We wish her well in her new location.

Another departure is Anna Carter, from the Trust's shop, whose husband has been transferred to North Norfolk. Anna tells us that she will be close to both Blickling Hall and Felbrigg, so she may have an opportunity to work again for the Trust - or she may volunteer to work on the North Norfolk Steam Railway!

The Gallery in the West Range has hosted a number of exhibitions during the Summer. Among these was the display of the work of the British Wildlife Carvers Association, which included a wide variety of work. Some pieces captured the spirit of the subject in natural wood, with a smooth, tactile finish, while others reproduced in minute detail the colour and arrangement of feathers.

Linda Mills, the Head Gardener at the Property, has a large collection of animals in her care. During this Summer, her horses have been on view in the working area of the Stable Block, next to the Shop.

Her latest acquisition is a one year old Welsh pony, named Munchie, which came from an R.S.P.C.A. rescue centre. He was found abandoned in Surrey, tied to a lamp-post by a tight halter which had cut into his neck.

After four months at Osterley, he had recovered, and has been much admired by visiting children.

In the park, the most evident feature is the disastrously low level of the Garden Lake. The run-off from the spring and summer rains had evidently been inadequate to match the rate of evaporation caused by the high temperatures and strong easterly winds. Fortunately, sufficient remains to float the ducks, although the Canada Geese are largely reduced to paddling! The number of fish does not seem to have been drastically reduced, as there are still sufficient to attract a couple of wading herons! The lower lake has been less affected, and sustains a good population of breeding birds, including a pair of swans who have succeeded in rearing 4 cygnets.

In the last week of August, a start was made on the resurfacing of the drive, from the car park entrance to the House. This is welcome news for stewards and other regular visitors; the gravel surface laid a few years ago had deteriorated to give a rough passage, both for pedestrians and for passengers in the courtesy bus.

My life pre-Osterley has been working up to my first job with the National Trust. I have had one permanent job before starting here. I was born in 1973 in the sleepy town of Hereford, and sent to boarding school at the age of eleven, at my wish having read too many Enid Blyton books. The only subject I was ever interested in was History, and this became my strength at school and later at university. I had a year out to do a secretarial course between school and university, to gain some practical skills and to live back at home for a year before going away.

I chose Aberystwyth, a wonderful somnambulant windswept Welsh seaside town (which I can recommend to anyone for a weekend away!), and soon settled into a Degree in History.

Whilst there I met my fiance, Alex, studying law, who is from the Cotswolds. After three years at Aberystwyth I decided that I wanted to get involved in practical living history and started to make enquiries towards the National Trust. I decided to take a Masters Degree in Heritage Management, so that my knowledge of history was more practical and specialised. The highlight of my one year course was my thesis, entitled *Fire: The Burning Issue in Historic Houses*, which soon became my obsession.

The summer that my course finished I managed to do some voluntary work for the Trust, which just intensified my desire to work for them. I worked at Ham House, mostly on the salvage list and the daily opening and closing of the house, and at Clandon Park (near Guildford), where I helped with daily conservation. Unfortunately funds ran out and I realised that I would need a paid job to stay with the Trust, so I started looking at the long-term and applying for jobs. I ended up as firstly a Gallery Warder at the Tate Gallery, and then four months later a Gallery Supervisor. This convinced me that I wanted to work with the public and in a front of house role. I particularly enjoyed the special events and functions side of the Tate, but wanted to become less of a security guard and more of a friendly face.

After nine months at the Tate I went back to applying for jobs with the Trust, having decided that I liked the sound of being a House Steward, as this combines a lot of hands-on conservation with dealing with the public on a daily basis. I soon heard about the need for a House Steward here and came to explore Osterley. My first trip to the house started off well when I renewed my membership of the Trust through Graham Rogers, who told me all about the situation at Osterley, and even pointed out the House Steward's flat for me. After a long talk with Graham I was even more desperate to get this job! I came back several more times to swat up before my interview, and was rewarded with getting the job!

I have worked here now since July 2nd, and lived here since July 10th. We share our home with Hammy, yes she is a hamster, and hope to one day graduate to a larger animal as well.

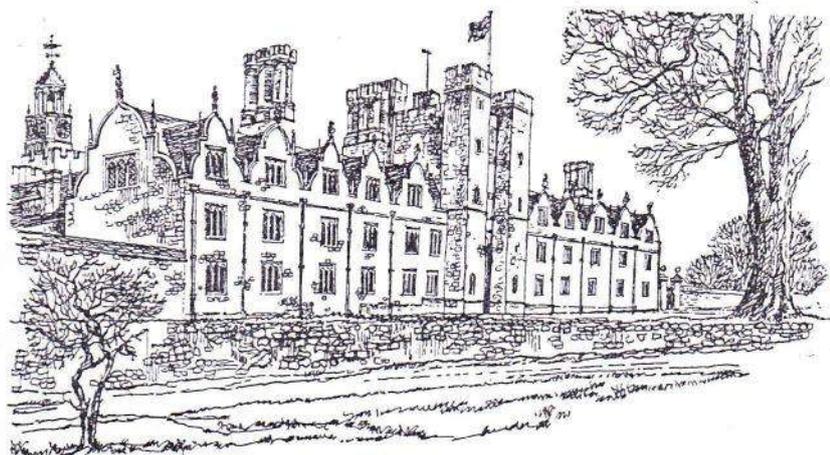
Alex works as a Solicitor in The City, but manages to relax and forget his job when he comes back home - he finds living here as wonderful as I do. I can feel myself falling in love with Osterley the longer I stay here. I have found that there is so much to learn, about the House, the job and the Trust. I eagerly await my tower scaffolding course in December and my housekeeping course in February, so that I will really feel like I know what I am doing! I would like to get as involved as possible in

conservation at Osterley, and to get to know each object in the house personally, and hopefully this will happen over the Winter when we close to thoroughly clean the house. My job is everything that I hoped it would be, and it is so reassuring that the structure is there to learn more from the Trust's experts, so that I can become the House Steward that Osterley needs.

Yours
Susie

Busmans Holidays 1997

Angela Lynsky

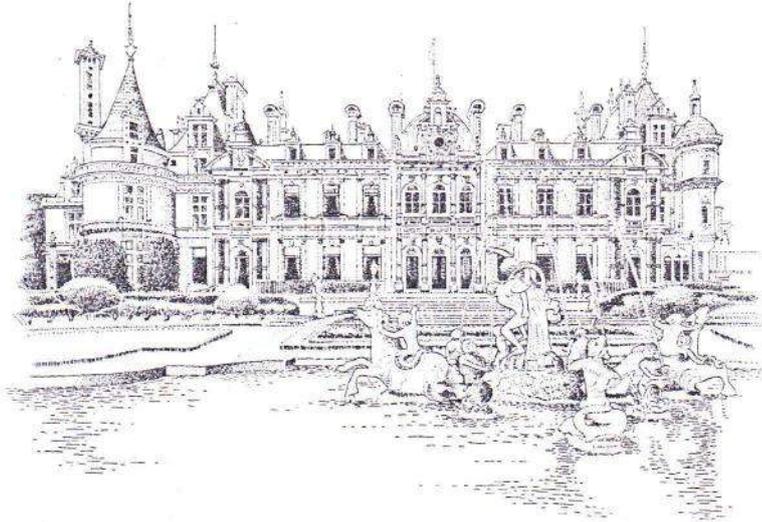


TUNBRIDGE WELLS & KNOLE 16th April, 1997

Three hours in Wells was barely enough to wander along the colonnaded Pantiles, stop for a brief look at the church of King Charles the Martyr, walk through the high street with its village atmosphere to the modern shopping mall at Royal Victoria Place. A few purchases at the local flea market, quick lunch in Camden Place, 10 minutes lost stuck in a lift then on again for fleeting glimpse at the Trinity Arts Centre - a lovely old church converted into a sort of theatre where you can sit on stage enjoying a cup of coffee and illusions of grandeur. There was just time enough to breath in the sights and scents of myriads of flowers and trees dripping with blossom in Calverley Grounds before rushing back to the coach.

KNOLE, this great house, revealed itself in breathtaking splendour as we topped the hill, its battlements and crenellations, Tudor chimneys and towers and Jacobean gables seemed not a hotchpotch but an harmonious whole. "Acquired" yet again by that very sticky fingered monarch Henry VIII and later given by Elizabeth I to her extremely friendly friend the Earl of Leicester and later to her cousin Thomas Sackville whose descendants have lived there to the present day. Built around many courtyards the house is so full of interesting things that you almost forget to keep looking out of the windows so missing wonderful views of the deer park outside or secret little courtyards within. There is so much to see in the house that only a general

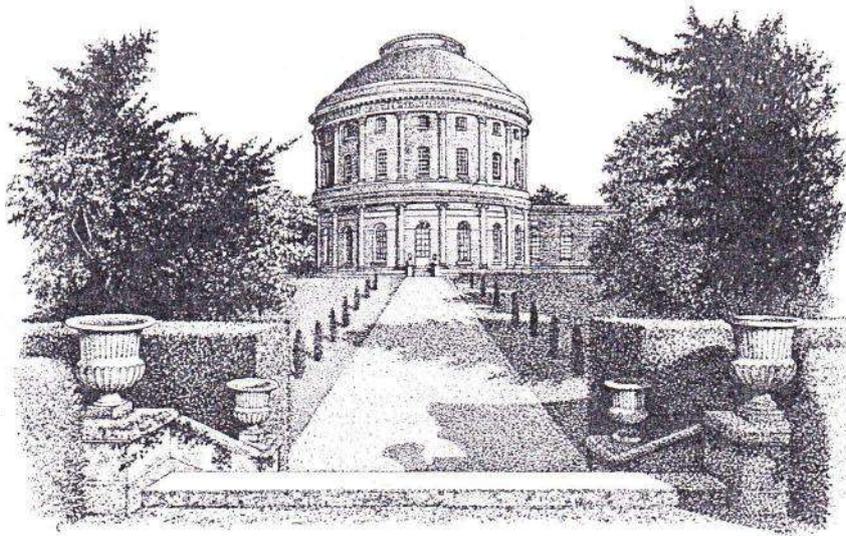
impression can be given of dark oak panelling, sombre murals, grey (once white) painted woodwork, newel post and pillars beautifully carved some in strapwork pattern and all looking very fragile. Bedrooms hung with well preserved tapestries and tasteful bed hangings (although I did find the gold and silver brocade fabrics in the Kings Room a little OTT). If you visit Knole - and you must - watch out for the unexpected but deadly steps sometimes up but more often down into those bedrooms, with my eyes constantly swivelling from ceilings to walls, from furniture to windows....I fell down most of them.



WADDESDON & AYLESBURY. 2nd May, 1997

Aylesbury pinched the title of County Town from Buckingham in 1725 but despite keeping up with progress still has its old Tudor alleyways and 17th Century houses around and radiating from the town square. The King's Head Inn founded in 1386 is now owned by the National Trust, the "Head" part of the name is supposed to be Henry VIII (he got around) and the inn itself boasts a pre Tudor stained glass window, personally I thought it could do with a good clean but then what can you expect of glass 500 years old!

WADDESDON it appears, was designed and built to look like a French Chateau, if so they made a mistake in NOT creating an approach road to give the house a commanding initial aspect. Built by Baron de Rothschild in the 19th Century I found the whole rather overstuffed, although I was informed and made to feel dutifully impressed that there are more Royal Savonnerie carpets in Waddesdon manor than in all the Chateaux (and I am aware that there are more than 144 of them) in the Loire Valley. When Georges Haussmann was busily demolishing Paris to rebuild to his grand plan, the oak panelling from the Duke de Richelieu's house, was acquired by Baron Ferdinand Rothschild for Waddesdon. Because of the Rothschild collections of French porcelain and many and various objects d'art the house does appear cluttered but I did appreciate the collection of Gainsborough and Reynolds pictures. The grounds are pleasant with pretty flower beds, good old trees and an aviary. An exhausting but very interesting day out.



BURY ST. EDMUNDS & ICKWORTH. 6th June, 1997

A lovely day in the beautiful county town of Bury St. Edmunds, only the remains of the Abbey can be seen set amid green lawns, an obvious favourite local park now. St. James Cathedral is very imposing but my heart was given to nearby St. Mary's Church both originally built in the 15th Century. St. Mary's has retained its humble peace and tranquillity, the hammerbeam roof supporting flying angels is breathtakingly beautiful. Mary Tudor, sister to Henry VIII (him again) is buried here. There was so much to explore in Bury St. Edmunds but not enough time to do so.

ICKWORTH - What an odd shaped house but how very pleasant. The main body of the house is built as a rotunda and from the entrance hall with its heavy towering pillars and almost obscure staircase you dive off to the left, circle round through the drawing room, library (at the back of the house), back through the dining room to the hall. From the hall there are corridors to the West and to the East leading nowhere it seems. Actually that to the west leads to the present family quarters and that on the east leads to the Pompeiian Room where the wall paintings are based on Roman paintings uncovered at the Villa Negroni. The land and house was owned by the Hervey family and the present building was built partially to the designs of the eccentric Earl-Bishop Frederick Augustus Hervey. However the Hervey that captured my favours was the one who fell in love with the milkmaid because she sang so beautifully while churning the butter - he married her too, which proves that there were gentlemen around even then!

BODIAM CASTLE & BATTLE ABBEY 7th July, 1997

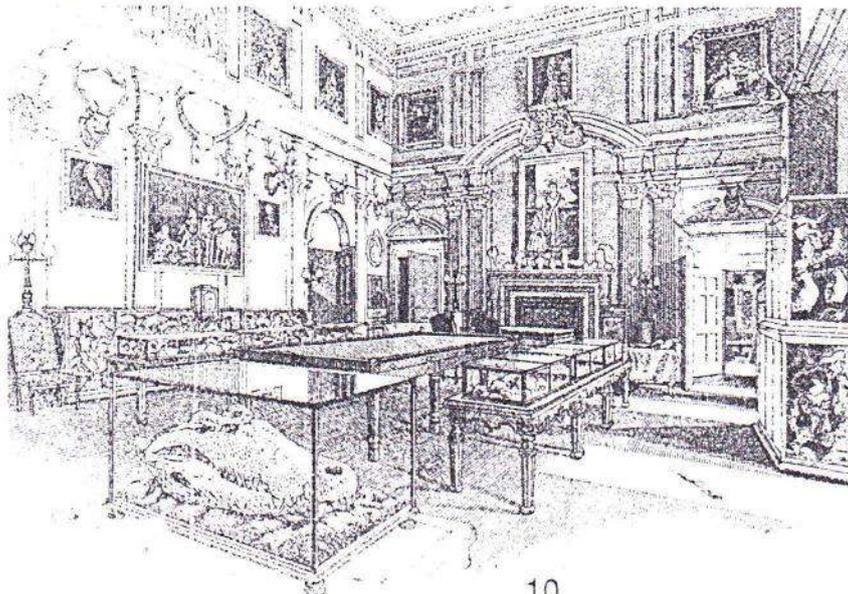
What a feast of history and adventure we had this day. Bodiam Castle could be the modern day knights dream of a medieval heaven. Almost a complete castle but in ruins, surrounded by a moat, entered across a jetty and drawbridge with sentry holes still intact. One was left with the memory of hundreds of wildly yelling children tramping up and down winding stone staircases in narrow turrets to hang precariously over parapets to admire arrow slits and crenellations. I was very impressed by the video showing in the old armoury turret - I now know how to hammer and weld a complete set of armour when next I need it.

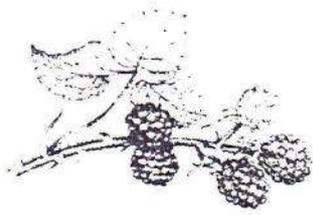
BATTLE & BATTLE ABBEY was wonderful. I loved the old town of Battle and Battle Abbey itself was excitingly presented. A hand held tape recorder gadget took you

through the Battle of Hastings sword thrust by sword thrust as you wandered around the battlefield. "I personally nabbed three of those rotten Normans before one got me through the cuirass". At the top of the hill are the foundations and ruins of the old Castle and Abbey, but for me the highlight was the ice house. I have never seen the inside of an original ice house before - 007 could surely use this as a setting for one of his films.... Imagine standing on the edge of a 100 ft. deep funnel, teetering on the brink of a vertigo inducing cantilevered diving board - not a place for the faint hearted. What a marvellous day.

CALKE ABBEY 3rd September, 1997

This trip to Derbyshire was the longest of the season and in some respects the most interesting in as much as this poor old house labelled "The House where time stood still" really is in very sad condition. The National Trust took over in 1985 and have made a start, the roof has been repaired but most of the house is in the state in which the last surviving member of the Harpur Crewe family left it. They were a family of collectors and the dilapidated rooms are full of stuffed birds, polished stones and cut out printed caricatures and cartoons stuck haphazardly on walls and screens. This house is the one used, I am sure, in those films where ghosts of children lost in never ending dusty corridors haunt the house for ever. If it hadn't been for the rope hand rail leading you around I am sure I would be wandering still. One lovely, amusing piece of joy I did find - a unit made of four thick bamboo poles set into a foot deep wooden tub tapering to a 3ft diameter drum over the top, complete with holes, at one side of the lower tub was a hand operated pump - have you guessed? of course, a shower unit. I only wish we had it at Osterley, what a talking piece for our guided tours. The piece de resistance in the house must be the Calke state bed presented by George II's Queen Caroline to Lady Caroline Manners, her lady in waiting, on her marriage to Sir Henry Harpur in 1734. This magnificent bed hung with 18th Century embroidered silk is still in pristine condition for it was never erected in the low ceillinged house. In fact it never escaped from its huge coffin box until now. I must mention the grounds and church. The whole site was originally an Augustinian Abbey and the lovely old church of St. Giles, now restored must be visited. The full time gardener keeps the walled flower and vegetable gardens looking so beautiful. My lasting memory of Calke will be walking through a walled archway into the blaze of dahlia's 4ft high and dinner plate flower heads in all shades of vibrant colour. I know I use the word breathtaking a lot - but this was BREATH TAKING





Dates for your diary

September 14th - October 5th.

Below Stairs - an exhibition of sculpture inspired by life below stairs at Osterley, by the Royal College of Art. Opening times as for the House.

October 21st.

"Friends" A.G.M. 7 pm. New Tea Room - see Agenda enclosed.

November 2nd.

End of season - House closes.

November 19th - 20th. 10 am - 12.30 pm.

Putting the House to Bed days - discover what goes on behind the scenes in National Trust Houses during the winter. Tickets £10 - to include tea and cake - from Hughenden Box Office - phone 01494-522234.

Autumn walks and talks

As we go to press, we learn that a series of walks and talks in the Park is being planned for November and December.

A leaflet describing these is being prepared, and will be available in the information point before the end of September.

For further information, ring Keren Manley on 0181-568-7714.

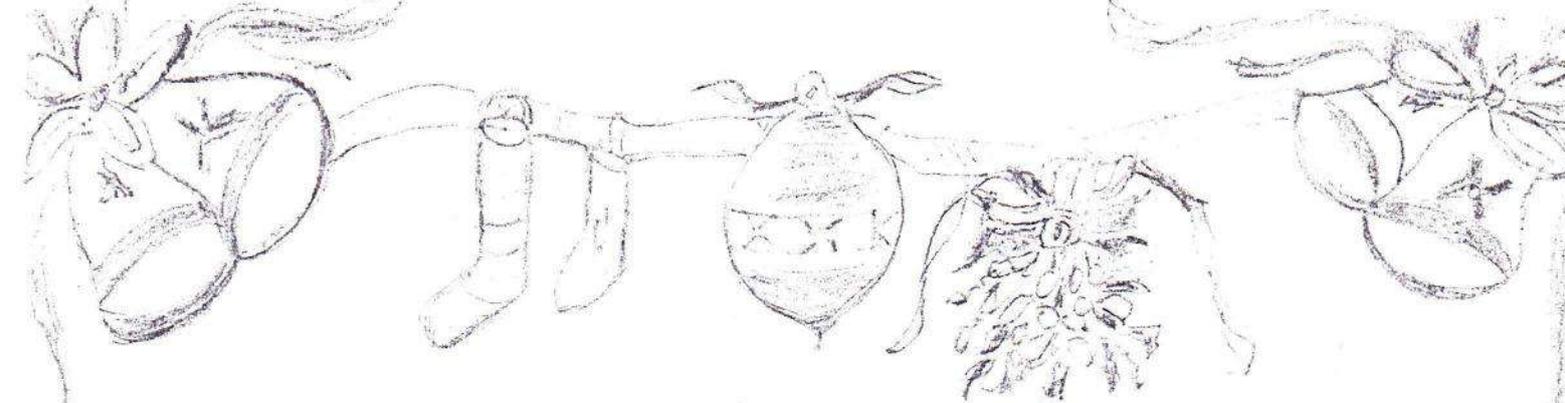


"Friends" Summer Outings

Once more Jim Tickle's programme of coach excursions to other National Trust properties has been well supported- some trips have been over-subscribed!

At present there are a few spare returned tickets for the outing to Basildon Park on 2nd October.

Phone Jim on 0181-894-1474 by 28th September for details



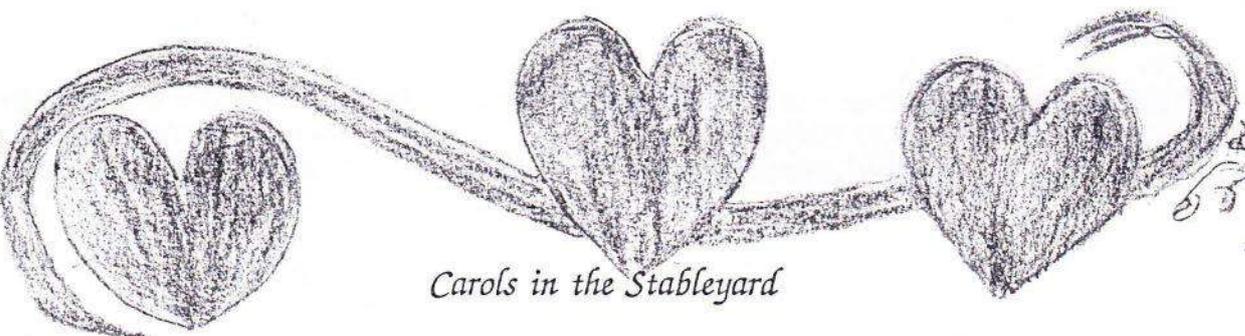
Christmas Shopping at Osterley

The Tea Room and Shop will be open as usual until the House closes on November 2nd.

From 5th November to 21st December, the Shop will be open from Wednesday to Sunday, between 12 noon and 4 pm.

It is hoped to arrange a special evening for disabled shoppers, who will be able to park in the Stableyard. For details, ring 0181 232-8188.

The Tea Room will be open on Saturdays and Sundays during this period. If fine weather brings visitors to the Park, it may also open from Wednesday to Friday during November.



Carols in the Stableyard

*December 7th: 3 to 4 pm. West London Opera Choir, directed by Tony Underwood.
December 14th: 3 to 4 pm. St. Mary's Singers, directed by Howard Stephens.*

*Mince pies and mulled wine on sale
in the Tea Room on both days.*

*February 4th and 19th. Friends Winter Lectures - St. Mary's Parish Hall
March 4th and 19th. Details in our New Year Issue!*