



The Friends of Osterley Park



A Supporters Group for the National Trust

Issue 30

NEWSLETTER

September 1998

George Francis Child-Villiers, Ninth Earl of Jersey, 1910-1998

Most members will already be aware that the Earl of Jersey, who gave Osterley House and Park to the National Trust in 1949, died in Jersey on August 9th.

The obituary notice in *The Times* states that "He will be remembered as a man of extraordinary generosity". He was a considerable connoisseur and an early collector of Impressionist paintings. When he opened Osterley House to the public in 1939 - one of the first of the stately home owners to do so - modern paintings were displayed upstairs in contrast to the Adam furniture in the State Rooms.

After his third marriage, he and the Countess visited Jersey and decided to live there - the first of his family to do so! He became President of the World Jersey Cattle Bureau, striving to maintain the purity of the breed. He was also an early supporter of Gerald Durrell, whose Jersey Zoo is dedicated to building up breeding stocks of endangered species for re-introduction to their wildlife habitats.

During recent years, since the Trust took over direct management of the property, he had visited Osterley several times, and had made a steady series of gifts to the House, including the Sevres porcelain, now displayed in cabinets in the lobbies adjoining the Entrance Hall, the Chinese Parade Vases in the Long Gallery, the Kirckman Harpsichord in the Breakfast Room, and miniatures and engravings of the family. Worthy of special mention are a pair of charcoal portraits of the Earl and Countess, which are displayed in the corridor outside Mrs. Child's Dressing Room, and the superb collection of family silver, securely housed in the Strong Room.

Lord Jersey's elder son, Viscount Villiers, died of a heart attack in March of this year - a blow from which his father never recovered. The title passes to his grandson William born in 1976.

Our sincere condolences go to the Countess and all members of the family.

These notes are written in early August, during a mini heatwave which has brought us some long-awaited summer weather. Maybe the exceptionally long, hot spells in June and July of recent years have led us to expect too much from the British summer; this year has certainly brought us back to reality.

Fortunately, by a series of happy chances, the open-air events in the Park were not greatly affected; if the sun did not necessarily shine, then at least we were spared the embarrassment of any "washouts" due to heavy rain. Reports on these events appear on following pages.

The start of this late summer coincides with the final major event of the season, the Band Concert. Thoughts now are turning to preparations for the Autumn and Winter. The "Friends" Annual General Meeting, planned for Wednesday 7th October, will effectively mark the end of one Season and the start of a new challenge.

Looking back, I see that I have occupied this "Chair" since the end of 1991. This, as the mathematicians amongst you will realise, means that I am now 7 years older than when I took on the job! While I have no immediate plans for "retirement", I am beginning to realise that there are challenges in the further development of the "Friends" activities which cannot at the moment be met by my own efforts, or by the existing Committee, who are also fully committed with their specific areas of responsibility.

In particular, I see the need for someone with drive and enthusiasm to take responsibility for Public Relations and Publicity. Previous experience in this field would be useful - but not essential! If there is anyone out there who feels that they have the qualities needed for such a job, could they please contact me before the A.G.M.

Summer Reception, 3rd June

This was announced in our March issue, and over 100 member's indicated when renewing their subscriptions that they were planning to attend. On the day, the weather was chilly and damp, and only about 50 members turned up. It was decided that after inspecting the floral displays in the Long Gallery, members would descend to the Jersey Gallery for a glass of wine, rather than venture onto the lawn as had been hoped.

We then moved into the Servant's Hall to hear Jean Grieve give an interesting and entertaining talk and demonstration of the skills deployed in producing the flower arrangements displayed each week in the principal rooms of the House.

Our thanks are due to Jean for taking time to give us the presentation; flowers in the House are often noted and commented upon by the more discerning visitor, and it was interesting to learn a little more of the care and dedication that goes into the preparation of the displays. Incidentally, further volunteers are always needed for this work and for the task of growing the flowers in the walled garden! Contact Sally Rogers at the House if you are interested .

Community Week, 5th - 12th July

This week's events began on Sunday, July 5th, with a gloriously fine morning for the Community Fair. Audrey and I were in the stable-yard early in the day, setting up the "Friends" Bric-a-Brac stall, alongside Felicity Bernstein, who had made a brave but late decision to run a Tombola stall for us.

Elsewhere, there was much activity in the Park, where the railing around the East lawn, from the causeway to beyond the Head Gardener's Cottage provided hanging space for a display of pictures by local artists.

Displays were also mounted by the Police, with an exhibition in the Old Brewhouse, and a collection of vintage ambulances on show. During the day, there were performances by local groups; hand-bell ringing by a team led by Harold Rogers, from All Saints Church, Isleworth, a drum band from Isleworth and Syon School, fencing bouts by the Regent Street Polytechnic Fencing Club, and dancing by students from the Village Dancing School, run by Jacqueline Gregory in St. Mary's Parish Hall.

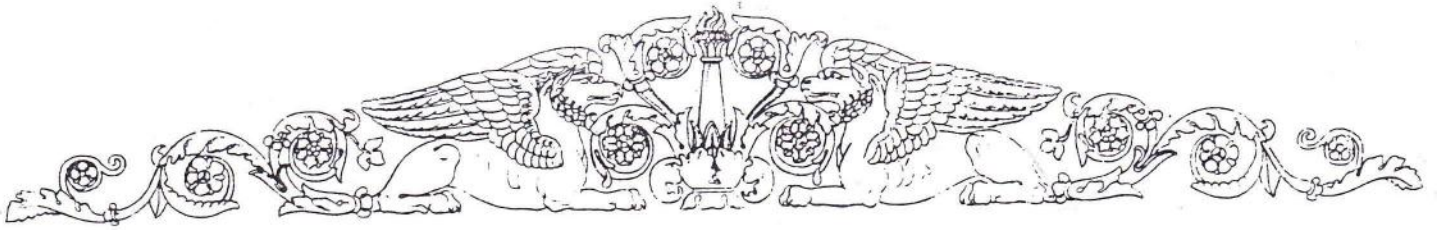
Visitors to the Park were not so plentiful as had been hoped; however, what they lacked in numbers they made up for in enthusiasm. By the end of the afternoon, the Bric-a-Brac stall had made £216 and the Tombola £200 for the "Friends". Thanks are due to Felicity Bernstein and Audrey Conacher for all the work they put into their stalls, to Audrey Ebison, Margaret Friday, and Geoff Spice for their help and to all those members who donated gifts for the stalls.

Unfortunately, during the afternoon the clouds gathered to obscure the sun, which seemingly had an effect on attendances for the performance by the *Covent Garden Minuet Dancers* in the courtyard of the House in the evening. However, the rain held off, and those present enjoyed a superb performance, enriched by magnificent costumes, and including a chance to take part in the dancing.

Throughout the week, the *Community Exhibition* in the Jersey Gallery displayed the work of local artists and crafts people. Local artists showing paintings included Frank Winterbourne, John Stacey, students from Isleworth and Syon School, and members of the Heston Artist's Group. Needlework and embroidery were shown by the ladies of St. Mary's Church, Osterley.

A new feature this year was a section of the show devoted to the work of the Trust's staff at Osterley, which revealed much hidden talent. Entrants were too numerous to list individually, ranging from the Property Manager to the Head Gardener's 7 year old daughter. Special mention must, I feel, be made of the wood carvings by Nathalie Muller, the Head Warden, who was inspired to start work after seeing exhibitions by the Surrey Woodcarvers in the Jersey Gallery over past years.





Open Air Theatre

Alice in Wonderland was presented by a Company from the Illyria team on Wednesday 15th July. This was the first time that the glade in the Pleasure Grounds, behind the walled garden, had been used for this purpose. The performance was well received by an audience of children and grown-ups of various ages.

Over the following weekend, July 18th and 19th, another Company from the Illyria stable gave performances of *The Taming of the Shrew*, in the same location. Fortunately, on both nights the weather was bright, and, although advance bookings had been low, this was made up for by a good number of sales at the gate to those cautious souls who had not taken a gamble on fine weather!

The production was in the usual Illyria style, with a small company doubling many of the parts, and much cross dressing, with costume changes at the side of the stage. Comic business and many running jokes enlivened the performance - notably, at the mention of Pisa, all the cast on stage leant over to their right! Costumes were colourful pastiches of 19th century dress. Altogether, two very successful evenings which were much enjoyed by appreciative audiences.

Glenn Miller Band Concert & Fireworks, 8th August

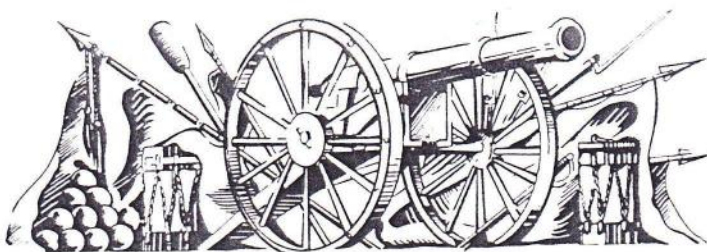
This was blessed with a gloriously fine summer evening, with a light breeze which tempered the power of the sun. From 5.30 onwards, a stream of visitors made their way onto the front lawn, weighed down with chairs, tables, rugs, hampers of food, cases of wine, and all the paraphernalia required for an al-fresco meal. Volunteer Stewards were assisting the Park Staff with car-parking, checking and selling tickets at the gate, keeping an eye open for illegal barbecues, and selling raffle tickets.

By 7.30, when the concert began, upwards of 3,000 people were seated on the lawn, ready to enjoy many of the standards made famous in the Forties by the Glenn Miller Band. The audience was made up not only of "wrinklies" nostalgic for the days of their youth, but included a large proportion of those who were not born before the middle of the century! This is, perhaps, due to the fact that since those days, there has not been the same wealth of memorable popular music than that which flourished in the Big Band Era of the 40's and 50's.

At about 10 pm. the audience turned their backs on the Band to watch a superb firework display, with musical accompaniment - no loud bangs, in deference to residents in Jersey Road! The performance finished with the classic *In the Mood*, which got many on their feet to dance on the grass.

Altogether a most enjoyable evening - so much so that many parties continued to sit on the lawn for some time, finishing their picnics before making for their cars - which helped to reduce the queue at the Park gates. There, the Police were ably controlling traffic to speed the departing crowds on their way. In all, a perfectly delightful evening!

Home Guard at Osterley



Audrey and I were astonished, while sitting watching a television programme in the series *Secret History* to hear reference to the role of Osterley Park in the training of the Home Guard during the early Forties. We mentioned this to John Livingston, one of our fellow Room Stewards at the House, and he produced for us a compilation volume of articles from the magazine, *Picture Post*, which included an article on this Training School entitled *The Home Guard can Fight*.

Apparently, the School was set up by Tom Wintringham, editor of the magazine, with the proprietor, Edward Hulton, who in June 1940 obtained permission from Lord Jersey to use the Park for this purpose.

The first course was run on July 1st, and during its period of existence the School provided training for over 3,000 members of the Home Guard. Many experts provided specialised knowledge for the courses, including Stanley Powell, one of the chief instructors from the Boy Scout Association, who had learnt fieldcraft from Baden Powell himself!

Others, including Tom Wintringham, had had recent experience of guerilla warfare gained in the International Brigade during the Spanish Civil War. These "lefties" were viewed with suspicion by some of the War Office Staff; others were opposed to the idea of training Home Guards as mobile fighting units. It was suggested that their duty was solely to man the "pill boxes". This Maginot mentality was not accepted by the School, who eventually obtained official backing for their activities.

The article includes several photographs, although it is not possible to identify any locations within the Park. The most obvious relic of those times is the brick back-stop wall of the rifle range, in the field by Windmill Lane, opposite the Hare and Hounds.

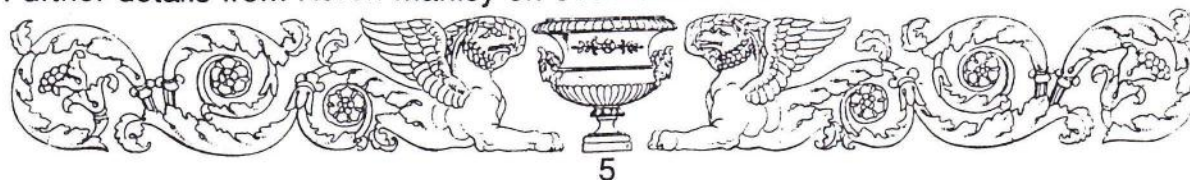
I have obtained from Channel 4 a copy of the video of this programme, and am hoping to show this to Volunteers at the House.

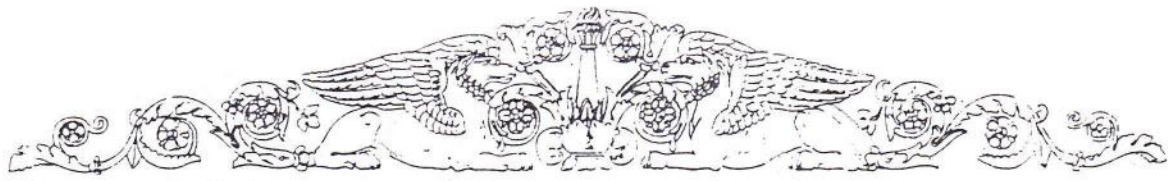
I would be glad to hear from anyone who has personal memories of the Home Guard in the Park.

Aspects of Osterley - A Seminar

This is the title of a one day seminar, on the unfamiliar, non-Adam history of the property, which is to be held at the House on Friday 25th September. The Programme includes talks by a number of speakers on such subjects as *The Architectural evolution of Osterley* and *The Osterley Menagerie*.

Tickets, price £30, include coffee, lunch and tea, plus free admission to the House. Further details from Keren Manley on 0181 568-7714





The Jersey Galleries

Much use is being made of these for exhibitions by artists and craftspeople working in many different media.

In April and early May, the Surrey Society of Sculptors staged their second exhibition at Osterley. This included carved pieces in stone and wood, and castings in plaster and metal, in styles ranging from the realistic to the abstract. The indoor show was accompanied by an outdoor display of large pieces in the Private Garden behind the Stable block. Altogether a very stimulating show, and we hope to see the Society again at Osterley.

Early August saw an exhibition of Creative Embroidery, by Margaret Mary Griffiths and friends. An interesting show with much to admire in the use of quilting, stumpwork and many other techniques.

For details of more exhibitions planned for the Gallery in the Autumn, see the Trust's Autumn & Winter Events Leaflet enclosed with this Newsletter.

Hip, Hip, and hopefully, Hooray!

Committee member John Robertson has had a series of misfortunes over the past 18 months. In March of last year, he fell heavily, breaking his left hip. After a spell in hospital, he returned home, only to break the right hip in a fall on the stairs.

A series of problems with the healing of these fractures have kept John on crutches for many months. However, he is now on the road to recovery, and we look forward to seeing him back at Osterley shortly, initially perhaps as a "user" of the battery cars for those with walking difficulties", but later back on duty as a Mobility Volunteer

As if this were not enough, John's wife Betty, a volunteer gardener at Osterley, has had serious eye problems during the last few months. Hopefully, she too will shortly be able to resume normal activities, including driving - and gardening!

Happy Birthday Jim!

Jim Tickle, organiser of the "Friends" excursions, was surprised to find bottles of champagne and a cake with candles produced on the outing to Saffron Walden and Audley End, which happened to be on his birthday!

Jim tells us he is now the proud possessor of a Bus Pass!

Once again, Jim has been fortunate with the weather during this season. We hope that this good luck will persist throughout the North Wales weekend in early September.





Annual General Meeting - 7th October, 1998

This will be held in the Old Brewhouse in the Stable Block at Osterley. As usual, we aim to make a social event of this, commencing with a glass of wine at 7 o'clock with the formal business taking no more than twenty minutes or so, from 7.45 pm.

This will hopefully be followed by a talk from the Property Manager, Barry Williams.

The Agenda for the meeting is enclosed, together with the Chairman's Report. The accounts for the year 1997-8 will be presented at the meeting.



Acquisitions for the House

At the May Committee, two items were tabled for which the "Friends" agreed to meet the costs.

First was a coin cabinet, costing £1,750, to house part of the coin collection recently donated to the House by Lord Jersey. This will be housed in the Strong Room, where visitors should be able to see some of this fine collection in the cabinet.

A collection of coins and medals was built up by Robert Child in the 18th century. This was housed in a magnificent cabinet, built for him by the cabinet maker, John Linnell, in the same style as the desk and tables which are still in the Library at Osterley. Illustrations of this can be seen in the books by Helena Heywood and Pat Kirkham, which are in the volunteer's library at the House.

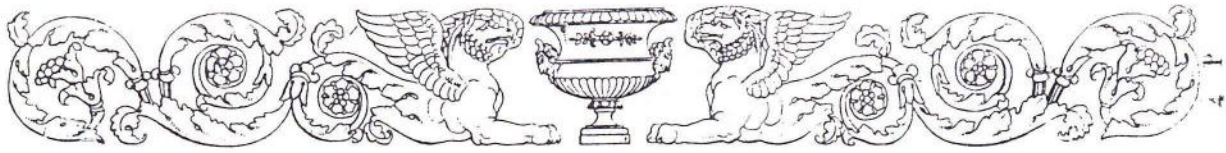
Also agreed was the sum of £1,840 for the purchase of a further five of the series of water colours by William Hayes, depicting birds in Mrs Child's Aviary at Osterley. Pictures from this series are presently on display in Mr & Mrs Child's bedchamber.

Two Seater Vehicle for the Disabled Visitor

In 1992, when self-drive Battery Cars first became available at Osterley for those with walking difficulties who wished to explore the Park, the fleet included a two-seat tricycle, which was much in demand by those who lacked confidence or ability to drive themselves, who could then be driven by their companion. This proved very popular, accounting for a high proportion of the "hirings".

Following an accident at the end of the 1997 season which cast doubt on its safety, it was decided to take this vehicle out of service.

At a meeting of the "Friends" Committee in late May, there was discussion about the



cost and availability of a suitable replacement. At that time, it was thought that a second hand "Golf Buggy", fitted with speed restriction and electro-magnetic brakes, would be acceptable.

During the discussion, Olive Marke advised that the Ealing National Trust Association were offering to purchase a battery vehicle for Osterley. This news was welcomed, as it would then allow the "Friends" to meet the cost of other items for the House.

The "Friends" were from the earliest days closely involved with the operation of these vehicles and continue to meet the cost of all maintenance and repairs. We are still taking a keen interest in the procurement of the new two-seater. After the May meeting, it was learned, firstly, that the Agents for the "Golf Buggy" were having some difficulty with modifications to make it suitable for use at Osterley, and secondly that "Batricar" has now produced an experimental prototype, based on their standard vehicle, "stretched" both in width and length to accommodate two persons.

This prototype was demonstrated at Osterley on 26th June to Barry Williams, Olive Marke, and others involved in the operation of these vehicles. It was agreed that this was a far more satisfactory vehicle than the "Golf Buggy" for use on the narrow paths in the Park. Hopefully, we shall shortly be having the use of the prototype for extended evaluation at Osterley, and E.N.T.A. will be ordering a new machine for next season.

Making these cars available to visitors requires the services of a team of volunteers, working in pairs on a fortnightly rota. The job is responsible but very rewarding, and further volunteers are always needed, particularly if the service is ever to expand from the present three days per week.

Any member interested in volunteering should contact Sally Rogers at the House.

PUZZLE CORNER

Jim Tickle's success at organising outings for the "Friends" is such that he never - or hardly ever - has to deal with the sort of problem posed as a Brain Teaser in a recent issue of the *Weekend Telegraph*.

It appears that some hapless individual organising an outing had calculated the costings so that each person going on the trip paid the same whole number of pounds.

Some days before the event, 6 people dropped out. To balance the books exactly, the organiser asked for an additional £2.00 per head from the remainder.

On the day of the trip, one further person went sick - and the organiser found that to make up for this, each person boarding the coach would be asked for an additional 40 pence.

How many went on the trip, and how much did they pay?

No prizes for the answer, which will be given in our next issue - or at the A.G.M. (Jim, of course, would solve this problem by running a raffle on the day!)