



The Friends of Osterley Park



A Supporters Group for the National Trust

Issue 31

NEWSLETTER

December 1998

Chairman's Notes

Ian Conacher

Once again the Christmas season is rushing towards us, bringing with it the familiar lists of things that need to be done - and the usual realisation that there is very little time in which to do them!

On the domestic front, things are going well - the cake is baked, the puddings are boiled and presents have mostly been bought.

However, as far as the end of year organisation for the "Friends" is concerned, things have not gone quite so smoothly - which is why this Newsletter is later in reaching you than I had hoped. Please accept my apologies for this.

This should reach you before the first of our Carol Concerts in the Stable-yard at Osterley. We hope that the weather will be fine enough to encourage a good number of members to support us on these occasions.

We have managed to complete the arrangements for our Winter Lectures for 1999. As usual these will be in St. Mary's Parish Hall, and we hope for our usual large and enthusiastic audiences. Full details are given on a later page.


Two new items are announced in this issue; firstly, we are proposing to change the "Friends" financial year, in order to simplify the presentation of our Annual Accounts. Secondly, we are proposing the formation of a "100 Club" to give a boost to our fund-raising efforts for the Trust. Full details of these proposals are given elsewhere in this Newsletter.

It has only just occurred to me that the change in the financial year means that I will shortly have to prepare a Chairman's Report for the nine months ending 31st December. Fortunately, this can be written after the Christmas rush, and will then be circulated in good time for the A.G.M., which will now be in May or early June.

indications are that I will once more be able to tell of another good year for the "Friends", with increasing membership and success in fund-raising.

Finally, I would like to send the Good Wishes of myself and the Committee to all members, for a Happy Christmas and a health and peaceful New Year.





News from the Trust.

The major news from the House is that Martha Godfrey has been appointed as Education Co-ordinator at Osterley, to stimulate demand from local schools for the use of the facilities that the property offers for educational visits, and to improve and expand those facilities. She has provided us with a short article giving her C.V. and her objectives for her time at Osterley. When I spoke to her recently, I expected to find that, with the House closed for the Winter, she would not be under any pressure. Far from it - she is now very busy building up her data base and knowledge of the Property in readiness for the new season.

Visitor numbers for 1998 were initially low, due to the bad weather in the Spring, but built up later in the season to finish at about the same total as the previous year, about 25,000. Shortly before the House closed for the winter, it was announced that for the 1999 season, the opening hours would be changed. From April 1st, the House will open from 1 pm to 4.30 pm each day from Wednesday to Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays. This will hopefully encourage those who like to come early, and allow visitors and room stewards to avoid the rush-hour traffic on their journey home.

Congratulations are due to Jacky Bretherton, manager of the Tea Room at Osterley, for gaining a "Heartbeat" award from the West London Health Promotion Agency for her healthy eating menu. This includes such specialities as sugar-free cakes and fat-free bread. Jacky is now busy providing Christmas lunches to pre-booked parties.

Gudrun Allsobrook has not so far featured in these pages. She came originally as a temporary replacement for Keren when she took a sabbatical in the Caribbean, and has stayed on in permanent position as Property Assistant.

The new picnic tables were heavily used during the summer months. Indeed, I was surprised, on a bitterly cold November afternoon, when the lake was partially frozen, to find a hardy family party enjoying their lunch at one of these. The "Friends" are hoping to provide further tables after landscaping of the area between the car park and the lake is completed.

Answer to the last puzzle.

If the numbers going on the trip at the three stages were A, B, and C, paying respectively £a, £b, and £c, then $Aa = Bb = Cc =$ total cost of trip. Each of these multiples must contain the same factors. But $B = A - 6$. Therefore A, B, must both be multiples of 6. Now $c = b + 40p$ so to produce a whole number of pounds c must be a multiple of 5.

By trial, these conditions are satisfied if $A = 42$, $B = 36$, and $c = 35$, with costs of £12, £14, and £14.40 respectively.

AMENDMENT TO THE "FRIENDS" CONSTITUTION

The Constitution of the "Friends" was drawn up at a meeting of the then Committee, in the Entrance Hall of the House in 1990. Much has changed since then!

In particular, your present Committee have come to realise that the "financial year", specified at that time to end on 31st March, does not match with the operating realities of the group. In March, members are renewing their subscriptions and making advance payments for the Summer series of coach parties, and these items are credited to our account before the end of the financial year.

The balance of subscription income, with further coach bookings, arrives in April, and it then becomes difficult when striking an interim balance to know exactly what our income is, what cash must be held in reserve to pay for coach hire, etc. and what is available to pay for purchases for the Trust.

Your Committee are therefore proposing that the Constitution be amended to state that the Financial Year shall run from January 1st to December 31st each year.

Strictly, a Special General Meeting should be held to approve such a change. However, we feel that this is not essential for what is only a minor alteration to the administration of the "Friends" accounts.

Unless, therefore, a substantial number of members indicate that they wish such a change to be debated at a Special General Meeting, we propose to put this new arrangement in place with effect from 31st December, 1998.

The next Annual General Meeting will therefore be held in May, to consider the "Friends" accounts for the period 1st April, 1998 to 31st December, 1998.

The Subscription year will remain unchanged, with renewals due on 1st April of each year.

Any payments for tickets for Winter Lectures received in December will not be paid in to our Account until after 1st January.

This proposal has been discussed with and agreed by our Hon. Auditor, Harold Rogers.



Carols in the Stable-yard



Local choirs will sing Christmas Carols in the Stable-yard at Osterley on two Sunday afternoons in December.

On the 6th, a choir from West London Opera will perform; this year, due to the illness of Tony Underwood, they will be under the baton of Howard Stephens.

Howard will also be conducting the "St. Mary's Singers" on Sunday, 13th. We are most grateful to Howard for stepping into the breach in this way.

"Friends" Winter Lectures.

Once again, these will be held in St. Mary's Parish Hall, Osterley Road, Isleworth, this year on Wednesdays 10th and 24th February and the same dates in March. The talks will start at 8 pm with coffee and biscuits served about 9.15.

On 10th February, Andrea Cameron, the well-known Local Historian, will make a welcome return visit to talk about *Sir Joseph Banks of Spring Grove House*.

On 24th February, we welcome the return of Mark Wallis, who last year spoke to us of *Satin, Snuff and Scandal*. This year his subject is *Great Britain - the most haunted island*, with tales of strange happenings and also of the love rituals of our ancestors.

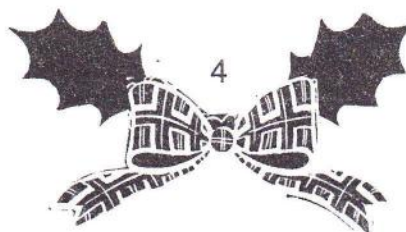
On 10th March, we welcome for the first time Peter Fells, former member of both the Thames & Chiltern Regional Committee of the National Trust. He will be speaking on *The Coastline of the British Isles*, with particular emphasis on National Trust properties and Enterprise Neptune acquisitions.

The speaker for 24th March is James Wisdom, Trustee of the Friends of Chiswick House. He will speak on Chiswick House and the restoration of its Grounds. The splendid Cascade was repaired and re-instated last year rejuvenating the Lake and adding the sound of water to the pleasure of strolling in the Grounds.

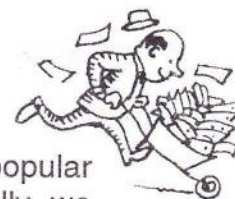
A booking form is included with this Newsletter, so that members may obtain tickets in advance, Tickets will also be available at the door - if any remain!

Spring Plant Stall

There will be no major Plant Fair at Osterley this year. However, on National Gardens Day, Sunday, 13th June, 1999, stalls will be set up by the "Friends" and the estate and volunteer gardeners. Green fingered "Friends" may wish to grow bedding plants for this!



FRIENDS 100 CLUB.



For many years, the formation and operation of a 100 club has been a popular method, used by voluntary organisations to raise funds for their causes. Locally, we learn that Ealing National Trust Association have been operating such a scheme for some years; even closer at hand, the Osterley and Wyke Green Residents Association ran a 100 Club in the days when they were raising funds to oppose commercial development in Osterley.

Basically a 100 Club is a private lottery, with one or more shares purchased by those members of a group who wish to take part. Ideally, to generate an attractive prize fund, around one hundred shares must be sold for the scheme to be viable.

John Robertson, who successfully ran the Club for O.W.G.R.A. in the eighties has volunteered to undertake the administrative work for the "Friends" club. He proposes that, subject to an adequate response from members, operations should commence in the New Year, with draws being held in May or early June and thereafter quarterly.

Half the money received from subscribers will be paid into a separate account, which will form the "Prize Fund". The other half will be transferred quarterly to the "Friends" general account, to be used for the support of the National Trust at Osterley.

It is proposed that the annual subscription to the "Friends" Club shall be £12; with 100 shares this would give a prize fund of £600. Prizes in the quarterly draws would, in this example, total £150 - say 1 @ £100, 1 @ £30, and 1 @ £20. Each of the 100 shares would thus have 12 chances during the year of winning a prize - much better odds than the National Lottery!

A return slip is included with this Newsletter to enable those who wish to join the Club to forward their £12 subscription. Alternatively, payment, by cash or cheque, can be made to John Robertson at the "Friends" lectures in February or March.

Members wishing to join later in the year will pay a subscription giving them entry to the four succeeding draws.

Green Guides and Dowsing Rods.

Driving the Courtesy Bus at the end of the season, I carried an American couple, filling the "unforgiving minute" between flights at Heathrow by visiting Osterley. As they left the bus at the Car Park, they asked me about the unusual conifer trees with red bark, just opposite the notice board. To my regret, I was unable to identify them. After they left, I found in my car the *Green Guide to Trees*, bought some time ago from a National Trust Shop, and was able to identify them as Swamp Cypresses. This book has a very clear key, enabling easy identification. I see it is now on sale at Osterley, and heartily commend it to you.

Another purchase from the Osterley shop was a volume of essays by Duff Hart-Davis taken from *The Independent*. One of these describes the prowess of Ted Fawcett as a dowser, working at Avebury. Many "Friends" will remember Ted, who was very much involved in the setting out of the gardens in the Pleasure Grounds. According to this essay, Ted also discovered traces of "dwellings set out in precise grid patterns by Stone Age town planners with unswerving accuracy. More research needed here!





Martha Godfrey - Education Co-ordinator.

As a new member of staff at Osterley, I was pleased to be asked by Ian Conacher to write a small piece for the Friends Newsletter, introducing myself and the aims for Education at Osterley.

I began my role as full time Education Co-ordinator for Osterley at the beginning of September. Since then I have been settling into my new position and office in the Study Base.

This is my second post with the National Trust. I was previously employed as Education Co-ordinator at Knole House in Kent, home of the Sackville's. This is one of the National Trusts largest houses and well worth a trip if you have not visited before.

Prior to this I have worked for a computer software company which produced educational software for schools and historic organisations like English Heritage and the National Trust. I also spent some time working for other heritage organisations including The Archaeological Resource Centre (ARC) in York, York Castle Museum, the North York Moors National Park and Aydon Castle in Northumberland.

York was also the University where I undertook my postgraduate MA in Heritage Management prior to which I read Geography and Archaeology at the University of Manchester.

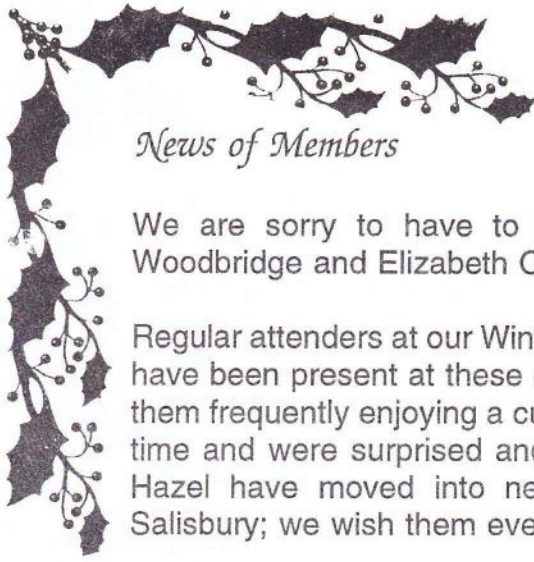
Since starting work at Osterley I have at times found the enthusiasm for developing education at Osterley almost overwhelming, but it is certainly keeping me on my toes! The most immediate aim is to target local primary schools. We have already had a number of schools participating in pilot visits during the Autumn term, which have proved a great success and valuable learning process for developing new resources.

A number of other projects are also underway, involving comprehensive and special needs schools from the surrounding boroughs and a number of local community groups. One specific project is a partnership scheme involving a number of comprehensive schools from Hounslow and Hounslow's School Curriculum Industry Partnership (SCIP) Co-ordinator, Garth Buckle. The project aims to produce a Teachers Resource Pack by July 1999.

Between now and Christmas, we also intend to transform the Study Base into an attractive, welcoming learning environment for visiting groups. This will hopefully be in time for our first family event on 20th December, a "Christmas Decoration Walk", followed by mince pies and possibly a visit from Santa and his elves! The afternoons activities are primarily aimed at children, though parents and grandparents still young at heart are very welcome, so please do come along and join in the festivities. Tickets will be on sale from the beginning of December.

I know I have not yet had the opportunity to meet all the Volunteers and Friends of Osterley, but I hope to be at the Volunteers Christmas Party on Saturday 5th December, so if we have not met before please do come and say hello.

However, be warned I am on the look-out for new Education Volunteers! - so if you think you might be interested in getting involved with education at Osterley, please do feel free to discuss it with me then.



News of Members

We are sorry to have to record the deaths of two of our members. Yvonne Woodbridge and Elizabeth Oddie. Our condolences go to their families and friends.

Regular attenders at our Winter Lectures will know Oliver Hinch and Hazel Leigh, who have been present at these over the past six years. My wife and I also used to see them frequently enjoying a cup of coffee in Tesco's. We had not seen them for some time and were surprised and delighted to hear from Oliver in September. He and Hazel have moved into neighbouring properties in a sheltered development in Salisbury; we wish them every joy in their new homes.

Tony Underwood, an active member of the "Friends", who has conducted the West London Opera Choir singing Christmas Carols in the Stableyard for the last few years, has been in hospital after suffering a stroke. Fortunately he is making a good recovery and by the time you read this he will be home. We are grateful to Howard Stephens, who will take over the baton and lead the singing on December 6th as well as with St. Mary's Singers on December 13th.

John Robertson, a normally active Committee Member, has had his mobility severely curtailed for many months past. However, following yet another operation on his right hip last month, he is - hopefully - well on the way to a full recovery. We're keeping our fingers crossed for him!

Nature Notes.

In the Park, it has been heartening to see the water level in the Garden Lake creeping up towards the top of the overflow pipe.

A further rise may flush out some of the water that has been lying stagnant in the lake for far too long. However, the water quality must be better than it appears, as our resident herons still seem to find it worth while to fish the lake.

Indeed, the low level of the Lake does not seem to have caused any casualties among other wild life. I understand that several "releases" are alive and well in its murky waters. Most obvious of these, at the end of the summer, was a large pale yellow *Coï* Carp, which could be seen foraging close to the causeway.

It is quite remarkable how introduced species have prospered in the Park. Red Squirrels were driven out years ago the American grey, Mandarin Duck and Canada Geese flourish on the Lake, and the screeching of small flocks of parakeets flying overhead is a familiar sound. Even the over-wintering Black headed gulls are comparatively recent invaders. On the debit side, many of the birds which were common 20 years ago are no longer seen - at least by the casual visitor. Nuthatch have gone from the trees in the drive, and the migrant Tufted Duck do not seem to visit our lakes.

One good sign, at least in my garden, is the increased number of long-tailed tits, visiting every tree in turn, and keeping up a constant thin, piping twittering. Skilled acrobats, they are a delight to hear and watch.

*'Didn't we have a lovely time,
- The day we went to Bangor!'*

Jim Tickle

For most of my fellow travellers, the highlight of this year's excursions programme had to be our first four-day break in North Wales based at Bangor University. The highly ambitious itinerary included visits to Chirk and Penrhyn Castles, Swallow Falls, Erddig, Bodnant Gardens and across the Menai Straits to Plas Newydd and the Isle of Anglesey.

I was delighted to receive, amongst many others, these comments from obviously satisfied customers:

'..an enjoyable and interesting trip. Everything went perfectly...Here's to the next time!' (Joan Cornford)

'It was great fun. I met volunteers from the House (Osterley) who I would not generally have the opportunity of meeting.' (Olive Marke)

'..so nice to have Barrie (Pyle)...he is a mine of information with all his experience.' (Rita Ford)

'A most delightful four-day break. The scenery was beautiful..' (Gwen Frowde)

'Bangor University couldn't be faulted. Food excellent and I don't think I have ever had better single-room accommodation. You even arranged the weather!' (Margaret Collins)

'..a highly successful experiment... the accommodation etc. will take some beating.' (Patricia Barrett)

'..a wonderful and happy break away with good friends.' (Elizabeth Hawtin)

'..we are all hoping Jim and Barrie will be prepared to put up with their troublesome charges next year, - and may we be first in the queue, please?'

(Hazel and Tony Collisson)

'When can we do it again?' (Angela Lynskey)

As for the 1998 day excursions, members will happily recall visits to Melford Hall, Smallhythe Place, Lamb House and Avebury Manor and, despite the long journey, the charm of Sudbury Hall and its Museum of Childhood. But probably the most popular visit was not to a National Trust property. Saffron Waldon and Audley End attracted (and deserved) enthusiastic approval; or was it just that the visit coincided with my "freedom pass" birthday, which Barrie and Angela helped me to celebrate with two bottles of bubbly to wash down Olive's delicious birthday cake!

In contrast, the Season ended rather quietly in the splendid Autumn colour of Sheffield Park Gardens, and though on this occasion there were several empty seats on the coach, our final financial state will allow us to make a healthy donation towards increasing picnicking facilities at Osterley.

Looking forward to next year (although we have almost exhausted the number of properties within a day's reach) we are considering the possibility of visits to such places as Uppark, Chartwell, Bath and Rochester and we may well repeat some of our earlier, more popular trips. Look for more detailed information in your next Newsletter.