



# The Friends of Osterley Park



*A Supporters Group for the National Trust*

Issue 32

NEWSLETTER

March 1999

*Chairman's Notes*

*Ian Conacher*

This is the first issue of the New Year, which I hope is proving happy and prosperous for all members. For your Committee, it has already produced some challenges for the coming months.

The change to our accounting year, proposed in our last issue, has been adopted, as no objections were received from the Membership. The books closed on 31st December, and are being audited in readiness for the A.G.M. in May - see later page!

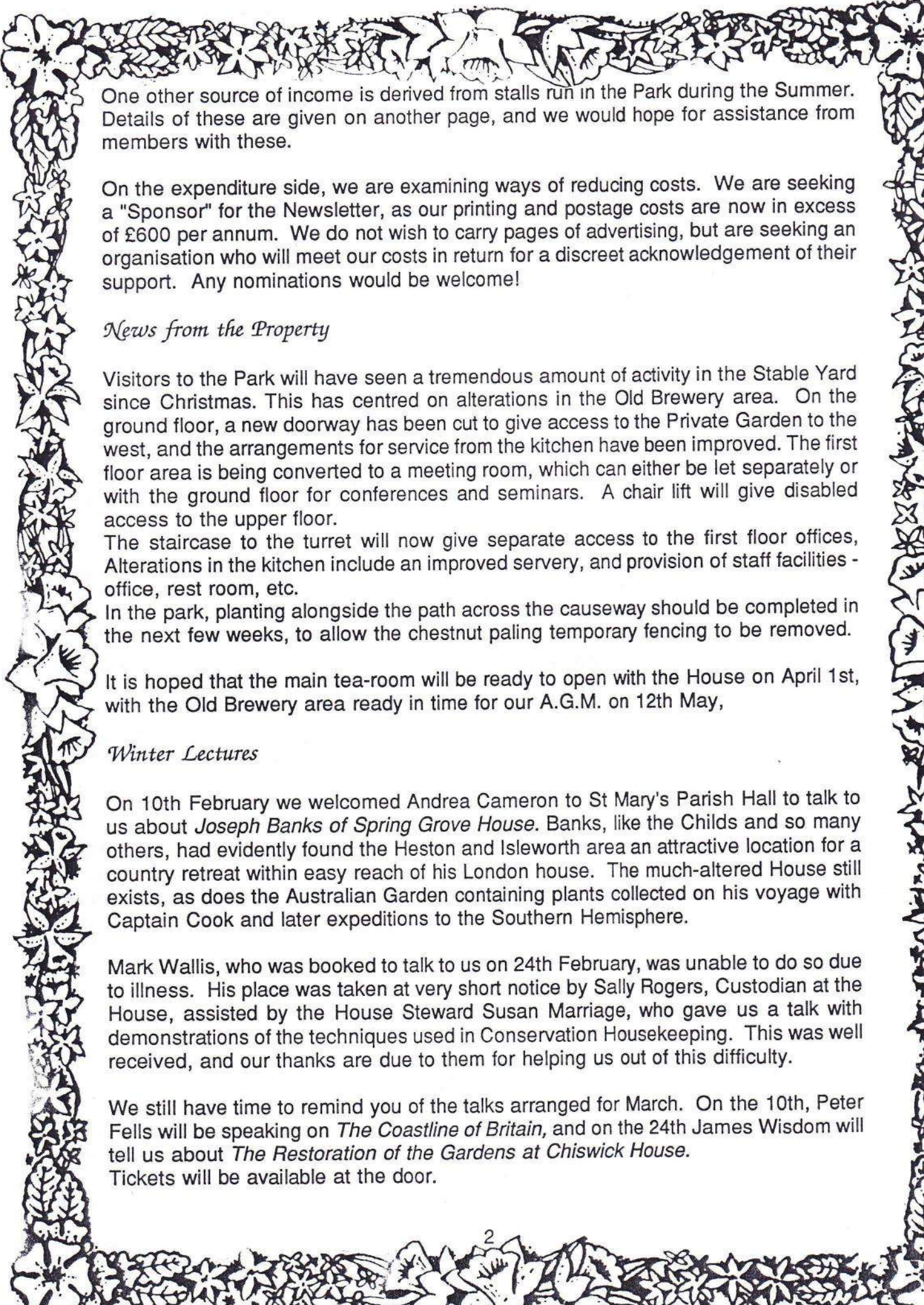
At the first Committee Meeting in January, we were able to produce and agree budget figures for Income and Expenditure for the coming twelve months.

The good news is that with our present forecasts it should be possible to donate a minimum of £3000 to the Trust at Osterley during the year. This could rise if income increased and other expenditure were to be reduced.

Essentially, our income is made up of Membership subscriptions and estimates of surpluses on activities and "Events". We do not run Winter Lectures and Summer Excursions primarily as profit-making activities. However; when calculating prices against anticipated costs, caution dictates that we assume less than 100% seat occupation - and if these activities are well patronised then a useful surplus results. We hope that Members will agree that in spite of this we still offer good value for money!

The best way to increase income is to increase membership, and perhaps the best way to do this is by word of mouth. If you have like-minded friends who you feel would benefit from and contribute to the "Friends", do try and get them to join us.

The "100 Club" is still looking for more subscribers so that we can realise the hoped for £600 of income that this could produce. We have already a good number who have pledged support, and have now decided to hold the first "draw" in the Spring, and to pay in cheques already received. We hope that additional Members will now respond by purchasing shares so that we can achieve the magic 100 shares! Further details and an application form are given within.

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One other source of income is derived from stalls run in the Park during the Summer. Details of these are given on another page, and we would hope for assistance from members with these.

On the expenditure side, we are examining ways of reducing costs. We are seeking a "Sponsor" for the Newsletter, as our printing and postage costs are now in excess of £600 per annum. We do not wish to carry pages of advertising, but are seeking an organisation who will meet our costs in return for a discreet acknowledgement of their support. Any nominations would be welcome!

### *News from the Property*

Visitors to the Park will have seen a tremendous amount of activity in the Stable Yard since Christmas. This has centred on alterations in the Old Brewery area. On the ground floor, a new doorway has been cut to give access to the Private Garden to the west, and the arrangements for service from the kitchen have been improved. The first floor area is being converted to a meeting room, which can either be let separately or with the ground floor for conferences and seminars. A chair lift will give disabled access to the upper floor.

The staircase to the turret will now give separate access to the first floor offices. Alterations in the kitchen include an improved servery, and provision of staff facilities - office, rest room, etc.

In the park, planting alongside the path across the causeway should be completed in the next few weeks, to allow the chestnut paling temporary fencing to be removed.

It is hoped that the main tea-room will be ready to open with the House on April 1st, with the Old Brewery area ready in time for our A.G.M. on 12th May,

### *Winter Lectures*

On 10th February we welcomed Andrea Cameron to St Mary's Parish Hall to talk to us about *Joseph Banks of Spring Grove House*. Banks, like the Childs and so many others, had evidently found the Heston and Isleworth area an attractive location for a country retreat within easy reach of his London house. The much-altered House still exists, as does the Australian Garden containing plants collected on his voyage with Captain Cook and later expeditions to the Southern Hemisphere.

Mark Wallis, who was booked to talk to us on 24th February, was unable to do so due to illness. His place was taken at very short notice by Sally Rogers, Custodian at the House, assisted by the House Steward Susan Marriage, who gave us a talk with demonstrations of the techniques used in Conservation Housekeeping. This was well received, and our thanks are due to them for helping us out of this difficulty.

We still have time to remind you of the talks arranged for March. On the 10th, Peter Fells will be speaking on *The Coastline of Britain*, and on the 24th James Wisdom will tell us about *The Restoration of the Gardens at Chiswick House*. Tickets will be available at the door.

## *Annual General Meeting*

This will be held on Wednesday, 12th May, in the refurbished Old Brewery Tea Room at Osterley. We hope that, as usual, we can dispose of the formal business of the evening in the minimum of time.

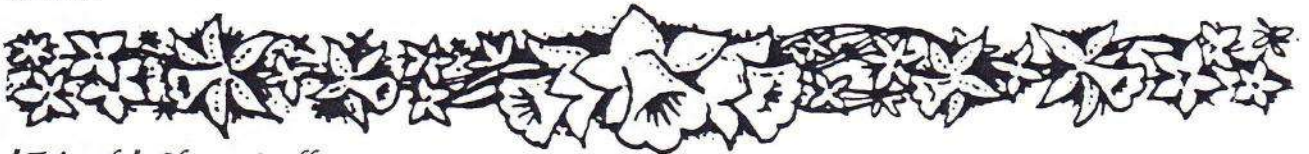
Before the Meeting, Members may visit the *Garden Kingdom of Worlitz Exhibition* in the Jersey Galleries from 6.30 pm which will be specially open for our Private View. Wine will be served in the Private Garden behind the West Wing of the Stable Block from 7 pm onward, and the meeting will commence at 7.45 pm.

Hopefully, there will be time afterwards for Barry Williams to give members an update on progress and planning for conservation and restoration at Osterley.

The Agenda for the meeting, together with the Chairman's report and the minutes of the last meeting, are enclosed with this Newsletter.

The Agenda includes elections to the Committee. I am becoming increasingly concerned about the lack of response from the Membership to appeals for fresh faces to come forward and join in the running and development of "Friends" activities. I have my own "Hidden Agenda"; with advancing years, I have set myself a date by which I hope to relinquish some or all of the jobs I presently do as Chairman. I would not wish to walk away without being confident that there was a strong Committee, with members able and ready to take on the management of the "Friends".

Ideally, we need a few individuals, around retiring age, who are looking for fresh challenges, who would take up some of the workload now and gain experience, before taking over a management role. If you are interested, please come forward and speak to me.



### *"Friends" Plant Stall*

We hope that the lengthening days will be encouraging green-fingered members to raise seedling for summer bedding plants. If so, could you please add a few extra boxes for "The Friends", and pot these on into three and a half inch pots ready for sale. Contact Ian Conacher or Jim Tickle for further information.

We hope to set up a stall for the sale of plants on Sunday and Monday, 30th and 31st May. Any unsold stock will be sold off on the following Sunday, 6th June, and we also hope to have plants for sale on National Gardens Day, 13th June. Income from all these - less any expenses - will go to the "Friends".



Arrangements for the coming season's excursions are now well in hand, as you will have gathered from the Booking Forms enclosed with this Newsletter. Following the success of last year's short break in North Wales and the demand for further similar ventures, the September outing will be a four-day visit to Northumbria; -- but more of that later. All the excursions have again been organised through European Heritage Tours with our reliable and most accommodating driver, Barrie Pyle.

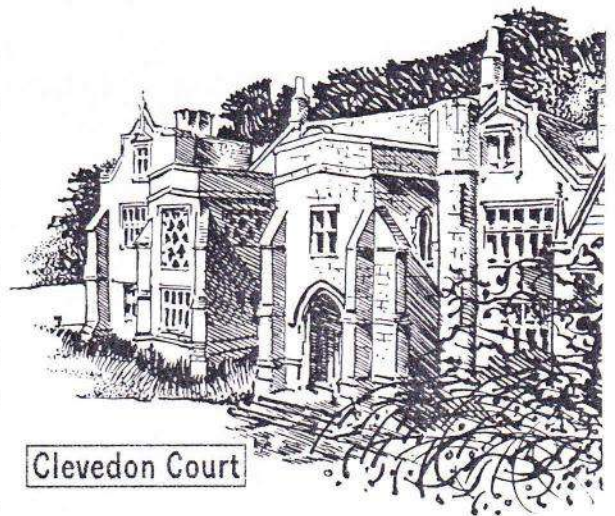
This year's day-trips, leaving Osterley promptly at 9.00 a.m., will be as follows:

Wednesday, 14th April ... Ascott, Buckinghamshire  
Monday, 10th May ... Uppark, W. Sussex  
Thursday, 3rd June .. .. Clevedon Court, Somerset  
Tuesday, 6th July ... .. Hinton Ampner, Hampshire  
Wednesday, 4th August ... Belton House, Lincolnshire  
Tuesday, 5th October ... Lullingstone & Rochester, Kent

Ascott (April), compared with that other majestic monument to the de Rothschild family at Waddesdon, is a relatively modest house, but it boasts a fine collection of works of art and elegant furniture. The gardens are equally remarkable, but be advised; as yet there is no tea-room! We expect to stop en route at the Waterperry Garden Centre, which proved very popular on a previous visit.

On our May outing to Uppark (beautifully restored after the horrendous fire which is well documented in the excellent Museum there) you will also have time to explore the quaint, old market town of Midhurst, which is rich in historic detail from the Middle Ages through to the Victorian era.

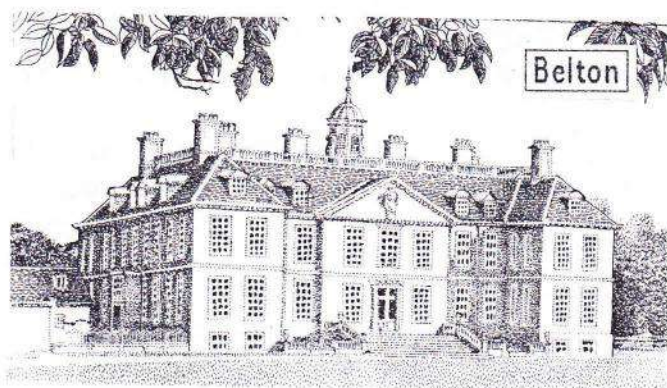
Victoriana abounds in the more recently restored seaside resort of Clevedon, nestling behind the Mendip Hills, - its elegant, uncluttered Victorian pier reaching out into the Bristol Channel where passengers waiting in a miniature version of the Crystal Palace can board the paddle steamers plying between Bristol and Minehead. Given good weather in June, our visit to 14th century Clevedon Court and its fine collection of Nailsea glass should be truly memorable.



Clevedon Court

Hinton Ampner (July) is justly proud of its superbly-kept gardens and on this occasion we shall also be able to visit parts of the House, restored (like Uppark) after fire damage in 1960 and now containing Regency furniture and Italian paintings. Prior to our visit, we will have ample opportunity to explore the bustling City of Winchester.

A very prompt start will be needed for the long journey in August to Belton House near Grantham, Margaret Thatcher's birthplace in Lincolnshire (i.e. the town, not the House, which is far too grand for a grocer's daughter!). Should time permit, we may pay a short visit to the old, historic town of Stamford, which is much associated with Lord Burleigh, Treasurer and Chief Adviser to Elizabeth I.



Remember to take your English Heritage Membership Card on the October outing to Lullingstone's amazing Roman Villa, where the free hand-held audio guide vividly illustrates life in Roman Britain. The rest of the day will be spent in the City of Rochester, where you may have lunch, visit the Cathedral and Castle (also English Heritage and once owned by the Jersey family), or simply wander the busy, narrow streets once so familiar to the author, Charles Dickens.

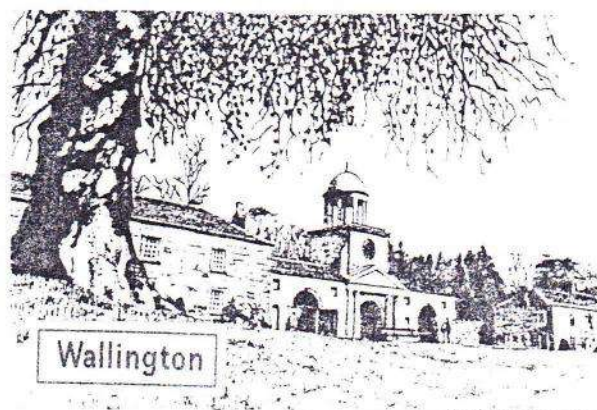
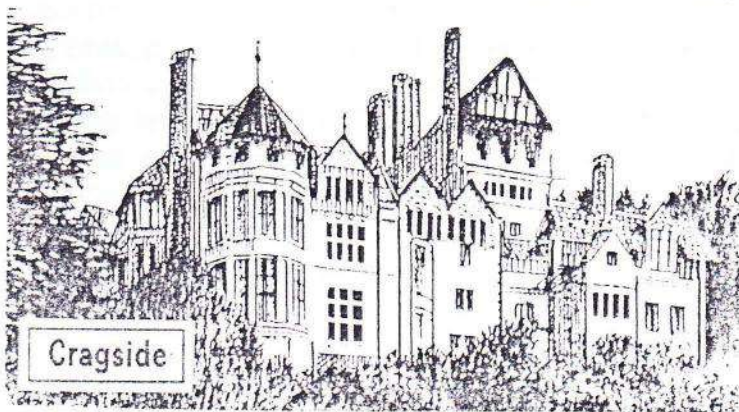
*Northumbria, '99*

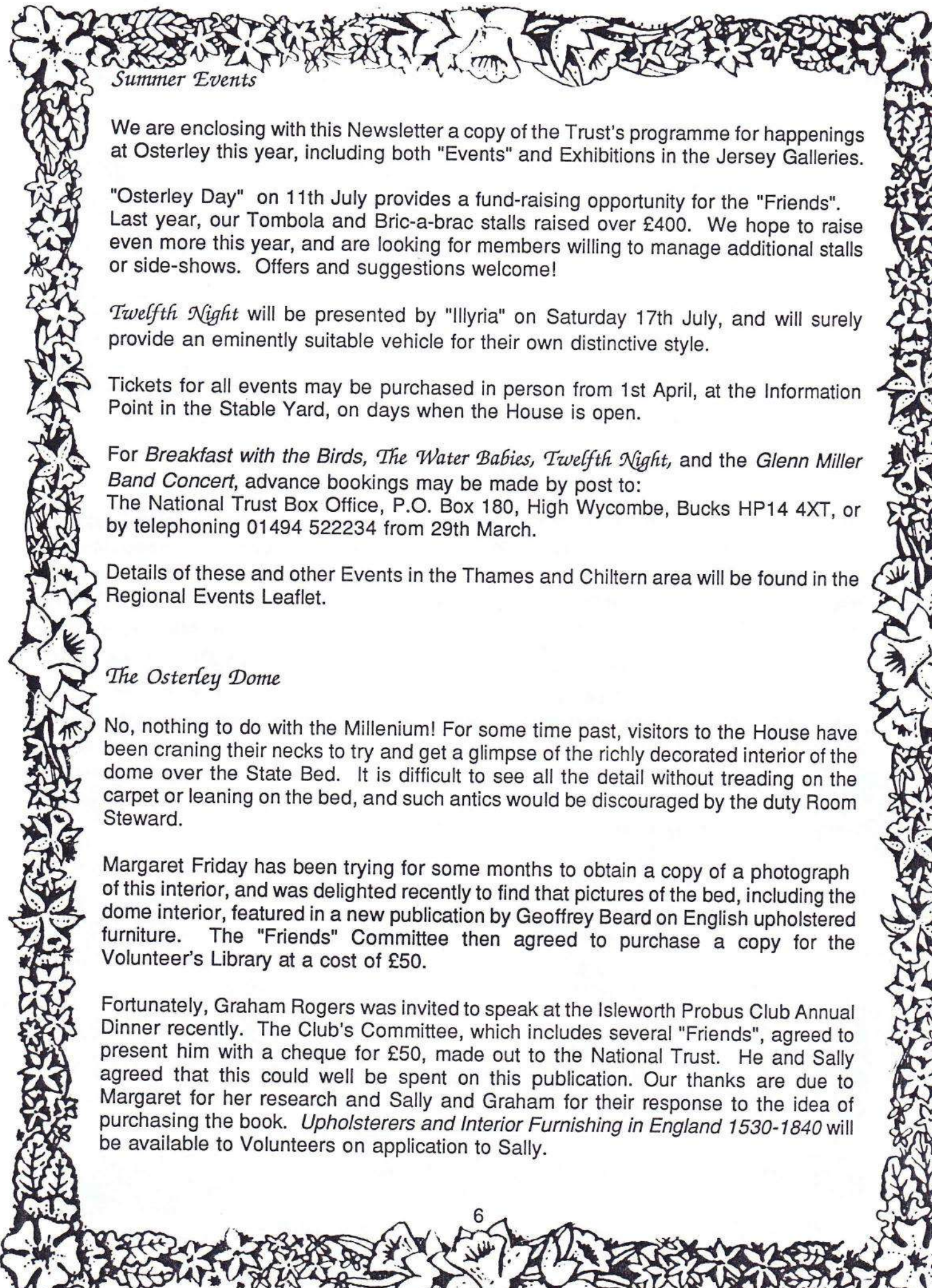
This year's four-day break will be from Thursday, 9th September to Sunday, 12th September, based at the Stockton-on-Tees Campus of Durham University. I had hoped that we might stay in the City of Durham, but, faced with problems of cost and availability only on split sites, I was pleased to accept the very modern, single en suite facilities offered by the Stockton Campus, twenty miles south of Durham. I have every confidence that those of you who take part in the trip will approve of the accommodation. Travel throughout is by fully equipped Westbus coach driven by our faithful friend, Barrie Pyle.

As to the programme of visits, you will find details of Lindisfarne Castle, Housesteads, Cragside and Wallington in your National Trust Handbook. En route through North Yorkshire, we plan to visit Newby Hall, a privately-owned Adam house near Ripon, which has strikingly similar features to Osterley House, including an almost identical set of Gobelins tapestries. The gardens of Newby Hall are amongst the best to be seen in Yorkshire.

Our last 'port of call', returning from the holiday, will be in South Yorkshire at Brodsworth Hall, a monumental Victorian mansion, one of English Heritage's most prestigious properties.

The total cost of the tour is £185, which includes half-board at the University, all travel and entry to Newby Hall (but not to NT and EH properties). An application form to reserve places on the tour is enclosed with this Newsletter, but do not delay. Numbers are limited.



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## Summer Events

We are enclosing with this Newsletter a copy of the Trust's programme for happenings at Osterley this year, including both "Events" and Exhibitions in the Jersey Galleries.

"Osterley Day" on 11th July provides a fund-raising opportunity for the "Friends". Last year, our Tombola and Bric-a-brac stalls raised over £400. We hope to raise even more this year, and are looking for members willing to manage additional stalls or side-shows. Offers and suggestions welcome!

*Twelfth Night* will be presented by "Illyria" on Saturday 17th July, and will surely provide an eminently suitable vehicle for their own distinctive style.

Tickets for all events may be purchased in person from 1st April, at the Information Point in the Stable Yard, on days when the House is open.

For *Breakfast with the Birds*, *The Water Babies*, *Twelfth Night*, and the *Glenn Miller Band Concert*, advance bookings may be made by post to: The National Trust Box Office, P.O. Box 180, High Wycombe, Bucks HP14 4XT, or by telephoning 01494 522234 from 29th March.

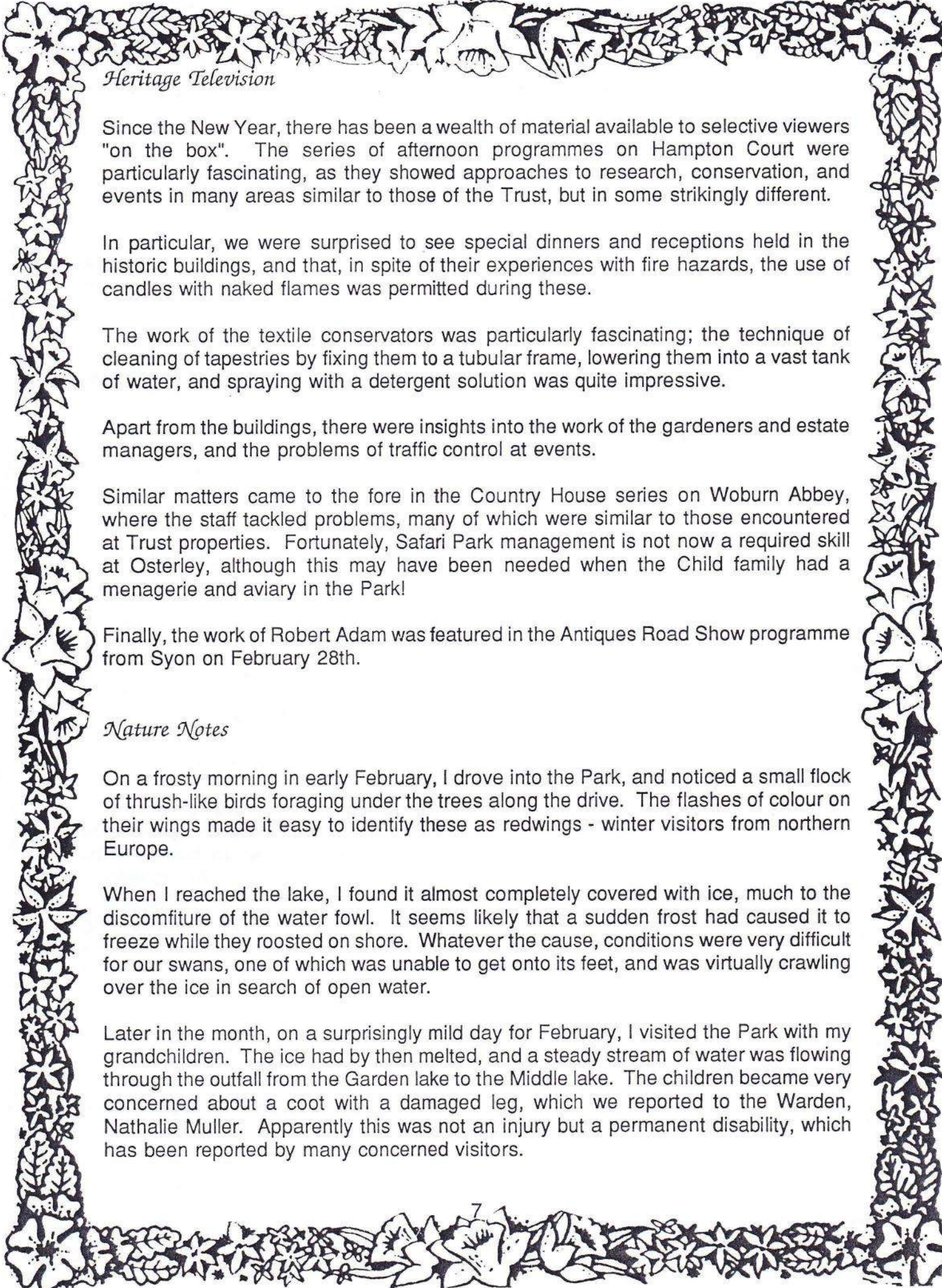
Details of these and other Events in the Thames and Chiltern area will be found in the Regional Events Leaflet.

### *The Osterley Dome*

No, nothing to do with the Millenium! For some time past, visitors to the House have been craning their necks to try and get a glimpse of the richly decorated interior of the dome over the State Bed. It is difficult to see all the detail without treading on the carpet or leaning on the bed, and such antics would be discouraged by the duty Room Steward.

Margaret Friday has been trying for some months to obtain a copy of a photograph of this interior, and was delighted recently to find that pictures of the bed, including the dome interior, featured in a new publication by Geoffrey Beard on English upholstered furniture. The "Friends" Committee then agreed to purchase a copy for the Volunteer's Library at a cost of £50.

Fortunately, Graham Rogers was invited to speak at the Isleworth Probus Club Annual Dinner recently. The Club's Committee, which includes several "Friends", agreed to present him with a cheque for £50, made out to the National Trust. He and Sally agreed that this could well be spent on this publication. Our thanks are due to Margaret for her research and Sally and Graham for their response to the idea of purchasing the book. *Upholsterers and Interior Furnishing in England 1530-1840* will be available to Volunteers on application to Sally.

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### *Heritage Television*

Since the New Year, there has been a wealth of material available to selective viewers "on the box". The series of afternoon programmes on Hampton Court were particularly fascinating, as they showed approaches to research, conservation, and events in many areas similar to those of the Trust, but in some strikingly different.

In particular, we were surprised to see special dinners and receptions held in the historic buildings, and that, in spite of their experiences with fire hazards, the use of candles with naked flames was permitted during these.

The work of the textile conservators was particularly fascinating; the technique of cleaning of tapestries by fixing them to a tubular frame, lowering them into a vast tank of water, and spraying with a detergent solution was quite impressive.

Apart from the buildings, there were insights into the work of the gardeners and estate managers, and the problems of traffic control at events.

Similar matters came to the fore in the Country House series on Woburn Abbey, where the staff tackled problems, many of which were similar to those encountered at Trust properties. Fortunately, Safari Park management is not now a required skill at Osterley, although this may have been needed when the Child family had a menagerie and aviary in the Park!

Finally, the work of Robert Adam was featured in the Antiques Road Show programme from Syon on February 28th.

### *Nature Notes*

On a frosty morning in early February, I drove into the Park, and noticed a small flock of thrush-like birds foraging under the trees along the drive. The flashes of colour on their wings made it easy to identify these as redwings - winter visitors from northern Europe.

When I reached the lake, I found it almost completely covered with ice, much to the discomfiture of the water fowl. It seems likely that a sudden frost had caused it to freeze while they roosted on shore. Whatever the cause, conditions were very difficult for our swans, one of which was unable to get onto its feet, and was virtually crawling over the ice in search of open water.

Later in the month, on a surprisingly mild day for February, I visited the Park with my grandchildren. The ice had by then melted, and a steady stream of water was flowing through the outfall from the Garden lake to the Middle lake. The children became very concerned about a coot with a damaged leg, which we reported to the Warden, Nathalie Muller. Apparently this was not an injury but a permanent disability, which has been reported by many concerned visitors.

It was encouraging to see a number of migrant Tufted Duck on the Lower Lake - I had begun to fear that they had been driven away by the Canada geese.

On the Garden lake, we spotted a pair of swans starting to prepare a nest in the reed-bed near the ice house. Hopefully this will survive, although the site is so close to the bank that the birds may well be discouraged by curious visitors and dogs. A pair successfully bred in this location in the mid eighties.

Also on the Garden lake, my daughter drew my attention to what at first site we thought was a grebe. Through the binoculars, this was recognised as a cormorant with a spectacularly white head. Nathalie told us that this was one of the Continental sub-species, not often seen in Britain.

Our garden has been visited several times in the last few weeks by a green woodpecker, which has been busily probing the lawn, his bright red cap glinting in the sun during his excavations. Several minutes were spent at each location, so that evidently his search for ants' nests was successful. Two mysteries - how did he know where to dig, and where had he come from, for our neighbouring suburban gardens seem an unlikely habitat!

*100 Club - We're over Halfway!*



*John Robertson*

Yes, the hundred club has passed the first target of 50 and in fact, at the time of writing is standing at 59. Thanks to all of you who have supported us initially.

We are still hoping to have the first draw on 24th March at the Winter Lecture but whether we do or not depends on you. We must have at least 90 shares sold otherwise we will have to wait until the A.G.M. in May. By the way, we have not yet paid your cheques in. We are trying to find the best interest bearing account. The cheques will be paid in within the next four weeks.

To those of you who have only one share and have early numbers it might be worthwhile for you to purchase another share now so that you get the benefit of the higher numbers.

To those of you who haven't yet bought any shares may I remind you that providing we are able to sell 100 shares we will be able to give the "Friends" £600 and have a quarterly draw of £150. This will give a First Prize of £100, second prize £30, and a third prize £20.

If we are unable to reach our target by May then the Draw will take place but the prizes will be lower ie: 60 shares - First prize £60, second £20, third £10.

Please think about this and keep the money coming in to benefit the National Trust at Osterley and maybe yourselves. Thank you.