



The Friends of Osterley Park

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A Supporters Group for the National Trust

Issue 33

NEWSLETTER

May 1999

Chairman's Notes

Ian Conacher

After a well-attended and successful A.G.M. on 12th May, I have once more the problem of finding something new to say in these pages. Rather than give members a full report on happenings at that meeting, I have chosen to circulate the "Minutes" with this Newsletter, together with the Accounts for the period ending 31st December, so that all Members are fully informed of the present state of the "Friends".

This leaves me free to comment on the achievements of the "Friends" and the challenges facing us in the next few months. It is good to know that we have an enthusiastic membership; the turnout at meetings and the support for Winter Lectures and for Outings and Tours is strong - to the point that Jim Tickle has waiting lists for many of these last! Support for the 100 Club as a means of fundraising has also exceeded expectations.

It is also good to know that our financial support for the Trust at Osterley is appreciated, as evidenced by Barry Williams remarks at the A.G.M. and by the letter from the Regional Director, Robin Mills. Last year we donated over £4,500 to Osterley, and so far this year the total is nearly £1,000.

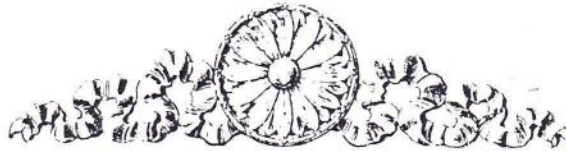
There is now, however, a risk that we shall in future deliver only the "mixture as before". Our small Committee, due to pressure of time, can do little more than keep the established routine going. We are working very hard to stay in the same place, rather than progressing with new initiatives, new fund raising events, membership drives, and so on. The one exception to this is the successful launch of the 100 Club, due to the hard work put into the project by John Robertson.

We are now, on paper, short of four members on the Committee. To fill all these vacancies may take time - but it is increasingly urgent that one or two active new members be co-opted to assist with the running of some of our present activities and enable us to plan new projects.

On a personal note, I shall soon complete 8 years as Chairman. While I still have enthusiasm and ideas, I find that the pressure of family and other commitments means that I no longer have as much time or energy to devote to running "Friends" activities as I had in the early '90's. Certainly there is no surplus of time available for the detailed development of new activities!

Fresh blood on the committee would allow me to concentrate on a Chairman's proper function as an Administrator, delegating much of the detailed organisation to Committee members, and eventually standing down in favour of a trained successor.

Without a strong Committee, I feel that the long-term future of the "Friends" is at risk. I would be glad to have responses from (younger?) members who feel that they have something to offer.



The month of May occupies a prominent place in folklore and in verse as the true beginning of a new season. On the first of May, in rural areas, there were at one time May Queens and dancing around a Maypole - not that we in West London saw much of this kind of revelry! The First of May is still, however, regarded by many as a milestone, when central heating is turned off for the Summer!

This year, May 1st was a bright and sunny spring day. Audrey and I decided to go up to Osterley House to view the Surrey Sculptors Exhibition, which we had not been able to visit earlier when "on duty" as volunteers. The show was, as usual, of a high standard, and we particularly enjoyed the outdoor exhibits in the Private Garden.

We spent some minutes in the Stable-yard, watching the farrier at work shoeing one of Linda's horses, and then strolled down to the lake, as I had heard that the swans nesting near the Ice House mound had hatched their brood. We were able to see the cob on the nest with the seven cygnets, with a heron fishing the shallows of the reed bed nearby. Meanwhile the pen was on sentry duty, seeing off any Canada Goose who ventured too close.

Down to our left, on the far side of the lake, a pair of Great Crested Grebe had also hatched their eggs. One bird had the chicks on its back, and was being fed by its mate, who was diving for fish nearby.

To our right, beyond the Ice House, we could hear a Woodpecker drumming on a hollow tree, presumably to attract a mate; there was a carpet of bluebells around the trees at the foot of the mound.

Later, as we sat on a bench by the lake, we were rewarded with the sight of the swans and their family on the water, dabbling for food and accepting bread from young visitors. A memorable day, with so many of the signs of Spring around us.

Bank Holiday Monday was again a glorious day, and crowds of visitors flocked to the Park. At one time the stream of arrivals was so great that it resembled the audience arriving for a major event, with picnics, chairs and rugs. Many visitors also entered the House, which kept the staff and stewards on their toes!

Later in the week, I noticed in my garden that the swifts were back, circling high in the sky with their incessant piping call. Another sign of Spring, which as the years go by become ever more worthy of note.

The early promise of fine weather faded, and by the end of the week it became cool and damp. This was a disappointment for Susan Marriage, the Trust's House Steward at Osterley, who was married at Heston Parish Church on Saturday 8th. Susan and her attendants were attired in 18th Century costume, and their departure from the house was delayed, partly by the throng of visitors all wanting to take pictures, and partly by a heavy shower when they were due to leave. However, the rain held off after the ceremony for the taking of photographs.

The "Friends" A.G.M. took place on May 12th. Again, the weather was unsettled, and we had to change our plans and serve wine in the Old Brewery rather than in the Private Garden. The minutes of this meeting are enclosed with this newsletter.

May 12th also saw the opening of the Exhibition of *The Garden Kingdom of Worlitz* in the Jersey Galleries.

Around the 16th of the month we had a spell of bright, sunny weather, still with a chilly east wind. In the park, the rhododendrons near the path from the Car Park were in full bloom, and the meadow east of the car park was bright with a vivid display of buttercups and other yellow wildflowers. So thick was this carpet that one visitor mistook it for oil-seed rape!

Late in the month, the Trust at Osterley took delivery of the new two-seater "Batricar" donated by Ealing National Trust Association. This enables a carer to drive a passenger with walking problems who would otherwise be unable to explore the paths through the pleasure gardens and woodland.



Wetland Bird Survey at Osterley

Patricia Barrett

I have completed the annual WeBS return listing our monthly count of the wildfowl on the lakes at Osterley for the National Wetland Bird Survey. It is always a delight to walk round the lakes and 1998 was no exception. All birds give Joan Cornford and me pleasure, the ones you take for granted like Mallards (in July we counted 114 adults and offspring), and the highly decorated Mandarins which are now firmly established at Osterley. Our collection of Mandarin ducks is listed in the nationwide catalogue of all resident and migrant wildfowl.

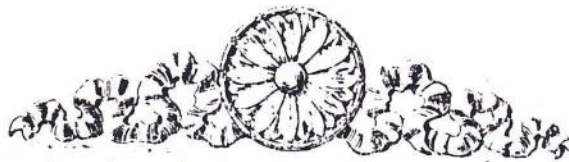
The grey herons successfully nested in the tall trees on the island in the lower lake and the cormorants perching nearby peaked to 24 in December. Tufted Duck visited again and 41 were seen in February this year. Jolly birds, the males have white sides, a tuft of longish black feathers which blow in the wind, a cheeky turned up blue/grey bill and a bright eye.

The lower lake exploded with Coots from October onwards - 46 of them in November and December - had they emigrated from the Sultan of Brunei's lakes we wondered. Coots are the plump black birds with a white shield on the front of their heads (hence "bald as a coot"). Moorhens have a red shield.

It is lovely to see a pair of swans on each lake, let us hope they have some cygnets this summer. Great Crested Grebe, those elegant diving birds with such graceful courtship routines, might also produce one or two noisy youngsters who will enjoy riding on their parent's back calling endlessly for more food.

The love/hate relationship with Canada Geese continues, on average about 50 are seen each month. On a very hot day last August 127 were counted, mostly under the trees by the garden lake.

Talking of the garden lake, it is wonderful to see it so full of water. Here's to a wet summer (with rain every night, of course)!



The major building works, undertaken during the winter months in the stable block, were completed in two stages. By April 1st, the refurbished Tearoom was able to open for trade, with additional seating in the section of the stables leading to the tea garden, and improved accommodation and facilities for staff. Barry Williams, with Gudrun and Karen, were able to return to their offices on the first floor, access now being by a very atmospheric Tudor staircase in the corner turret - where one almost expects to see 16th century graffiti, as in the Tower of London!

By early May, the work in the Old Brewhouse was completed, giving a refurbished meeting room on the ground floor, with adjacent lavatory facilities, and meeting rooms on the first floor, with access by a chair lift. These facilities were enjoyed by those members who came to the "Friends" A.G.M.

Since the start of the new season, Christine Williams has been ensconced in the Information Point in the Stable-yard, dealing with ticket sales and recruiting for the Trust. The number of visitors to the House is higher than at this time last year, possibly due to the poor weather driving people indoors. Recruiting figures are also up, which is good news for Osterley, as all receipts come to the property.

Sally Rogers, the Custodian, will be leaving Osterley at the end of June. Her husband, Graham, has succeeded in obtaining a post at a private property, Sherborne Castle, and Sally will be working alongside him there. We wish them both every happiness in their new location.



HELP WANTED!



The Plant Stall, to be run on 13th June, is still needing donations of stock for sale - house plants, bedding plants, shrubs, etc. Please contact Ian Conacher on 0181 560-8523 if you can help.

We also need help on Osterley Day, 11th July, either by donations for the Tombola and Bric-a-brac stalls, or offers of help on the day with these or other fund-raising ventures. Please contact Audrey or Ian on the number above if you can assist.

The Garden Kingdom of Worlitz: the exhibition in the Jersey Galleries

A Review

Joyce Wilderman

This special exhibition shows many photographs of the famous German Gardens along with models of some of the renowned houses and gardens. A large map helped locate them. The picture of the chinoiserie garden house reminded me that it was not just the English in the eighteenth century who were mad for things Chinese.

My favourite things in the display were the steel engraving of Schloss Orinienbaum, the splendid wax fruits which looked very real and the model of Worlitz Castle.

It was unfortunate that the labelling was all in German as it is not one of my languages. We have such wonderful houses and gardens in England that our expectations of beauty and interest are exceedingly high, making it very difficult for properties from abroad to compete.

"Friends" 100 Club - we've made it!



John Robertson

Yes - the 100 Club has passed the first hundred and is well on the way to 150, thanks to the support of so many generous members.

We were able to hold the first draw at the Winter Lecture on 24th March, with 92 members and prizes of £90, £25, and £15.

The second draw was made at the A.G.M. on 12th May. By this date we had sold 120 shares, which allowed the prizes to be enhanced to £100, £35, and £25, and a fourth prize of £15.

Our thanks again to those of you who have bought shares; even if you haven't been one of the lucky winners, you have the satisfaction of knowing that £720 is going into the "Friends" funds for the support of the National Trust at Osterley. And remember - each share entitles you to entry to four draws to there are more chances to come!

Those of you who haven't yet bought shares - particularly new recruits to the "Friends" - are reminded that they may join the Club at any time; there is no limit on numbers, and the first 100 is merely the launch pad for the next! Hopefully, by the end of the year, we shall have raised over £1,000 for the Trust.

The next draw will take place in October, at the "Friends" Autumn Reception - date to be advised - when hopefully the increase in membership of the 100 Club will allow the total value of the prizes to be increased.

An application form for membership is enclosed with this newsletter.

Winners of the March Draw were: -

1st Prize	- £90	Miss Elizabeth Hawtin	(34)
2nd Prize	- £25	Miss A. Browse	(47)
3rd Prize	- £15	Miss P. A. Timms	(20)

Winners of the May Draw: -

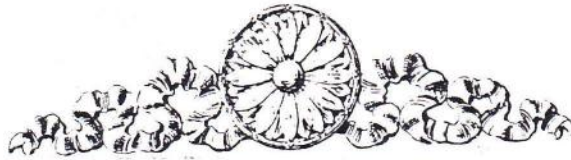
1st Prize	- £100	Mrs Audrey Conacher	(58)
2nd Prize	- £35	Miss P. A. Timms	(20)
3rd Prize	- £25	Peter Bush	(14)
4th Prize	- £15	Miss M. V. McQueen	(32)



Change to Rules: At the A.G.M. it was agreed to change the arrangements for holding 100 Club funds. Rule 8 has been revised to read:-

"Monies received for shares in the "100 Club will be held by the "Friends" in a separate sub-account. The balance of the income received, not allocated to the Prize Fund, will be transferred at intervals to the "Friends" general account, and used solely to support the National Trust at Osterley".

Coming Events



The Trusts leaflet giving details of all the Summer Events at Osterley was enclosed with our March Newsletter. We give below a brief resume of these: -

Sunday 13th June, 11 am - 4 pm. *National Garden Scheme Open Day*

In the Walled Garden. Admission - Adults £1, children free. (Includes the "Friends" plant stall.

Sunday 11th July, 11 am - 5 pm. *Osterley Day*

Pictures in the Park around the railings, with music, dancing, children's games, displays, stalls, etc. Admission free, with Free Car Parking. Includes the "Friends" stalls!

Wednesday 14th July, 6 pm - gates open at 5 pm. *The Water Babies*.

An open air performance of a play for children based on Kingsley's story.

Bring rugs or a chair and picnic before the show.

Tickets:- Adult £8, Child £5, Family £26. No Dogs Please!

Saturday 17th July, 7 pm - (Gates open 6 pm) - *Twelfth Night*

Another lively presentation by "Illyria" of one of Shakespeare's best known comedies.

Bring seating and a picnic for this Open Air Performance.

Tickets:- Adult £9, Child £5. Family £25. No Dogs Please!

Saturday 7th August, 7.30 pm - (Gates open 5.30 pm) **Glenn Miller Concert**

Ray McVay leads the Orchestra in an Open Air concert of the sounds of the 40's. Grand Firework Finale! Bring picnic, rugs, chairs, but please NO Dogs!

Admission - Adult £13.50, Child £6, Family £35.

Saturday 21st August, 2 pm - (Gates open 1.30pm) - *The Pied Piper*

Openwide present a new play for children. Open Air performance - bring rug or chair, but please, no dogs! Tickets:- Adult £4, Child £3, Family £8.

Friday 17th - Sunday 19th September, 10 am - 5 pm - **Live Crafts Show**

150 stalls, with artists and craftspeople selling their products and demonstrating their skills. Adult £3.50 Child £1, Family £8 - Pay at the Gate.

National Trust Members Free on Friday only.

Thursday & Friday 4th & 5th November, 10 am - 12.30 pm - *Putting the House to Bed*.

Behind the scenes in Osterley House as the staff prepare for the winter.

Adult £12, Child £6. Includes tea and biscuits. Advance Booking Essential.

Early booking is advisable!

Tickets for all events can be bought by cash or cheque at the Information Point in the Stable Yard between 1 pm and 4.30 on days when the House is open. Advance booking by credit card can be made by phoning 01494-522234.

