



The Friends of Osterley Park



A Supporters Group for the National Trust

Issue 34

NEWSLETTER

September 1999

Summer at Osterley

Ian Conacher

July of this year was one of the driest on record. On a domestic scale, this has had a dramatic effect on many gardens. Mine suffered badly, with scorched lawns and wilting shrubs.

Osterley Park, however, provided an oasis of greenery throughout the month; the lawn in front of the House continued to flourish, except where "crop marks" showed the outlines of earlier works, such as the ponds in front of the House, and the central drive. The water levels in the lakes remained high, although the Garden Lake fell to three or four inches below the overflow.

The fine weather led to intensive use of the Park, not only at weekends but, once the school holidays began, during the week also. On a visit with my grandchildren in the last week of the month, we noticed that only three of the seven cygnets hatched by the swans on the Garden Lake were still surviving; on the lower lake, the parents had succeeded in rearing all five from their clutch.

Whilst on a further visit in the first week of August, we noted that there had been several late hatches of water fowl. On the Garden lake, a female tufted duck was escorting five tiny ducklings, which appeared to be already feeding themselves, repeatedly diving in search of food. These contrasted with a brood of young coots on the lower lake, pestering their parents for food with an incessant shrill piping cry.

We also watched the young cygnets on this lake, also self-sufficient, grazing on the lake bottom with their tails in the air - quite an amusing sight! I hope that the cygnets on the Garden Lake have not been so well supplied with bread by visitors that they have not learnt the skills needed for survival when winter comes.

Bread is becoming a problem, as some well-meaning visitors tip large quantities into the Garden Lake. The water then becomes overloaded with nutrients, leading to a deterioration in water quality. During our visits, we saw that the third of the picnic tables, all paid for by the "Friends", has now been erected adjacent to the Car Park. These tables have been much used and appreciated by visitors.

We also noted that the Estate Staff were having a busy time, gathering in the hay crop from the East Meadow. This hay will provide some of the winter feed for Linda's herd of eight horses.

Getting in the hay crop is an essential prelude to the firework display which follows the Band Concert. A report on the concert appears later in this Issue, with the other Summer Events. Details of Events planned for the remainder of this year are given on another page.

Osterley Day, 11th July.

This was a well-supported event; the clear blue sky of a perfect Summer's day drew a large number of visitors to the Park. The railings from the causeway round to the gate near Linda's cottage were lined with displays of the work of local artists, to be admired or to be purchased.

Stalls on the lawn were erected by a number of local societies and Charities. Children could enter a painting competition - or have their faces painted!

In the Private Garden behind the west wing of the Stables, the work of a local sculptor was displayed, alongside demonstrations of wood turning, much of the material coming from trees from the Park. The adjacent Garden Gallery showed a display of the work of the Heston Art Group.

The Jersey Galleries, in the lower floor of the House, housed an Exhibition of the work of the local branch of the Embroiderers' Guild, arranged by Joan Hazell, and including the work of some other members of the "Friends".

In the Stable Yard, there were displays by a local dancing school, and a jazz concert by the Southall Great Western Preservation Jazz Band.

The main centres of interest in this area were the "Friends" stalls. Audrey Conacher had a well-stocked Bric-a-Brac stall, thanks to the many donations from Members, which succeeded in raising approximately £200. The success story of the day was, however, Felicity Bernstein's "Tombola" stall. Donations enabled over 360 prizes to be assembled; these were all ticketed, and raffle tickets were sold at £1.00 a time. By 4.30, the stall had been cleared of all prizes, resulting in a profit to the "Friends" of £360! Felicity tells us that sales were boosted on a very hot day by punters desperate to win a can of soft drink!

Our congratulations are due to Felicity, Audrey, and their helpers, raising a total of £560 for the "Friends". This Event is growing in popularity with the public, and it is to be hoped that next year the "Friends" can put up more stalls to raise even more money for the Trust.

Twelfth Night, July 17th

This performance, appropriately by actors from the "Illyria" production team, was sold out before the day, presumably due to the Company's growing reputation for bringing a fresh approach to the presentation of Shakespeare's works.

Fortunately, the weather was again kind; the audience of about 450 began to arrive about an hour before the show, many of them armed with picnic hampers, rugs, and chairs. Careful marshalling separated the "Circle", with chairs, from the "Groundlings", sitting on rugs, so that all had a good view of the action.

The cast numbered only 5 players and, as always with an "Illyria" production, there was much "doubling" of parts, requiring some cross dressing. This could have confused those not familiar with the play; central to the plot of "Twelfth Night" is the decision of the shipwrecked Viola to pass herself off as a man for her own safety.

As usual with "Illyria", the production highlighted the sometimes bawdy content of the "business" between the comic players - an aspect which was perhaps not brought to the fore by the teachers in my schooldays!

The whole performance was lifted by the pace and quality of the acting. Even at the back of the "Circle", the cast were clearly audible, in spite of the steady background hum of the traffic on the M4.

The status of "Illyria" as a production company can be gauged by the fact that, after last year's performances at the Edinburgh Fringe, they were invited to travel to Orlando, Florida, for the International Fringe Festival, at which they won several Awards. This year, their itinerary reads like a Gazetteer of the British Isles, playing at venues from Wick to Plymouth, including Edinburgh again; they then travel to British Columbia for the Fringe Festival at Vancouver.

We understand that the Trust are negotiating for them to return to Osterley next year.

The Glenn Miller Band Concert, August 7th.

The run of good luck with the weather for outdoor events seemed to have deserted Osterley during the run up to this show. Heavy rain fell on the Wednesday night, and the forecast for the weekend was poor. More rain fell on the Friday Night, and we woke on Saturday to grey skies and a steady downpour.

However, by mid-day the rain had eased off, and by the time we set off at 3.30 to report as Stewards for the evening, the sun had broken through and the skies were clearing.

By 5.30, the Audience were beginning to arrive, armed as usual with all the paraphernalia for elaborate picnics. Sales of tickets at the gate were brisk, as many "doubting Thomases" had waited for the weather to improve before committing themselves.

This year, the band was under a new conductor, Ray McVay, with a more dynamic approach, as this was evident in the quality of the playing and the traditional "Big Band" approach to the performance, with the various sections standing up for their set pieces; the trombones, in particular, followed the Glenn Miller style by turning from side to side and raising their slides in the air in unison.

The repertoire included not only the Miller classics of the early Forties, but also pieces by other "swing" musicians of that era.

The vocal numbers were also presented in a lively manner.

The climax of the evening was, as usual, a magnificent firework display, accompanied by (recorded) classical music played over the sound system.

Altogether, a night to remember, enjoyed by an audience of over 3,000 people. After last year's show, I had doubts about the ability of this band to continue to attract the crowds - but the changes in the style of presentation have vastly improved their prospects!

News from the Property - A welcome!

Phillip King has been appointed as "Custodian" of Osterley House, responsible for the care and presentation of this historic building, in succession to Sally Rogers.

Phillip was previously Custodian of Claydon House, in Buckinghamshire. We wish him every success in taking on this new challenge.

'Friends' Autumn Reception - Wednesday, 13th October, 7.00pm

A chance to have a Private View of Lord Jersey's Coin and Medal Collection, recently donated to the Trust, and housed in the cabinet purchased by the "Friends" and restored at their expense, with other treasures in the Strong Room.

Members will also be able to meet the new Custodian, Phillip King, and to have a private view of the Exhibition in the Jersey Gallery of paintings, sculptures and other works by Laura Godfrey-Isaacs, with an introduction by the Artist.

Wine will be served in the Servants' Hall during the evening.

The third Draw for the "100 Club" will be made at about 8.30 pm.

Gudrun Allsobrook - Property Assistant, Osterley Park

Even though I have been working at Osterley Park for nearly two years now, I am sure that there are still many people who do not know who I am or what I do here. I am originally from Cardiff, and am a proud Welsh girl. However, my unusual name does not nail from Wales, it is Scandinavian. I would one day like to return to live and work in Wales, so I am brushing up my Welsh again while I am living in Kew. Before studying my degree in History at Reading University I qualified as a Royal Academy of Classical Dancing teacher, but I have never used my qualification and I think I have left it too long now!

While I was at Reading I gained my first experience of working with the National Trust as a volunteer learning the dying art of dry stonewalling which I put to use in the Cotswolds. I continued my formal studies at St. Mary's University College in Twickenham where I gained my postgraduate Diploma in Heritage Interpretation. During this vocational course I worked at Painshill Park in Cobham, a recently restored 18th century landscape garden. I was also lucky enough to work at the Weald and Downland Open Air Museum in West Sussex, the National Museums and Galleries of Wales Marketing Department in Cardiff and the Open Air Museum of Welsh Folk Life, also in Cardiff.

I came to Osterley initially to cover the position of Visitor Services Co-ordinator for 6 months while Keren Manley was on leave. I was kept on to run the Education programme for the summer, then I was offered a permanent position as Assistant to the Property Manager, Barry Williams. I thoroughly enjoy the varied nature of my job at Osterley, and of course, working in such pleasant surroundings. I work closely with Barry and Keren in the newly refurbished offices above the Brewhouse in the Stableblock. Even though we are tucked away, we are busy all year behind the scenes organising functions, events, weddings, designing leaflets, disaster planning,

health and safety, answering enquiries and more besides.

I am also responsible for carrying out the weekly Property Account. It is linked directly to our regional office and it not only records all the money we receive at the property but our visitor numbers, cars parked, new recruits, tickets sold, and the weather! It is a vital tool for our understanding of visitor patters, spending patterns in the Shop and Tea-room, and the success and popularity of Osterley Park and the National Trust as a whole.



"Friends" 100 Club

John Robertson

The third draw will take place at Osterley on 13th October, 1999. We have at the moment 129 members and that means a distribution of £195.

The prizes will be as follows:

First prize £100, Second prize £40, Third prize £25, Fourth prize £15, Fifth prize £10

You will note that a fifth prize has been added. More prizes will be added as more members join.

Now that you have had your summer holidays why don't you take out a subscription or an additional subscription? A 100 Club application is enclosed with this newsletter. I look forward to seeing you at the next Club draw on Wednesday, 13th October!



Coming Events at Osterley

Live Craft Show, Friday 17th-Sunday 19th September, 10am - 5pm.

This show will feature more than 150 crafts people and artists demonstrating their skills and selling their creations. Live music and children's entertainments will also feature.

Admission - Adult £3.50, Child £1.00, Family £8.00. (pay at gate)

National Trust Members free on Friday only.

'Putting the House to Bed' - Thursday 4th & Friday 5th November.

A chance to see at first hand the work involved in preparing for the winter months after the House has closed to Visitors.

10 am to 12.30 pm. Admission - including tea and biscuits -

- Adults £12.00, Children £6.00.

Tickets on sale at Information Point in Stableyard, from 1 pm to 5 pm, from Wednesday to Saturday. Postal Bookings to Keren Manley, Visitor Services, Osterley Park House, Jersey Road, Isleworth TW7 4RB - Telephone 0181-568-7714.

EARLY BOOKING ADVISABLE!

Carols in the Stableyard, Sundays 5th & 12th December, 2.30pm

Once more, we have arranged for programmes of carol-singing on Sundays before Christmas.

On December 12th, a choir from West London Opera will be led by Tony Underwood, and on the 12th the St Mary's Singers will be conducted by Howard Stephens.

As we close for press, we are hopeful that a further choir can be found for Sunday 19th December - more news in our next issue!

Winter Lectures 2000.

It seems probable that St Mary's Parish Hall - due to be replaced by a new building during next year - will still be available for our series of talks up until the end of March.

We are now preparing a programme of speakers for your edification and entertainment - full details in our next issue!

Fortunes of War

*The House is the Bank now,
windows taped; shuttered or barred.*

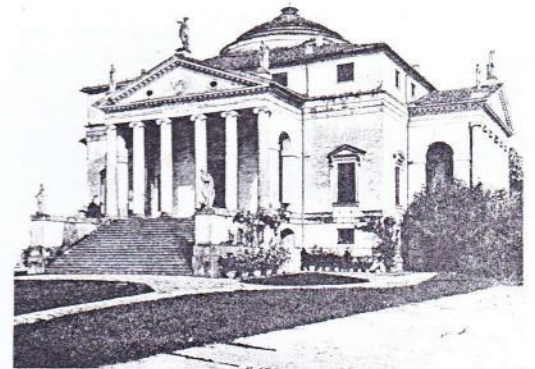
*The crunch of boots on gravel
for Orders barked from the Yard.*

*Telephone wires, through cedars, tack
insulators making strange buds.
- stranger still,
the pasture sprouts ack-ack;
and the troops are mainly Home Guard.*

*Nissen Huts curve at every corner,
some house Italian PoWs
- and did these men gaze up at the Portico,
shed a tear for home,
for the Glory that was Greece,
the Grandeur that was Rome?*

(Last 2 lines with apologies to E. A. Poe.)

John Stacey



Villa Rotonda, Vicenza

