

DM Coby



The Friends of Osterley Park



A Supporters Group for the National Trust

Issue 36

NEWSLETTER

March 2000

Chairman's Notes

Ian Conacher

Welcome to a new year, a new millennium, and the Tenth Anniversary of the formation of the "Friends"!

A meeting of local members of the National Trust and other local groups was held in the Entrance Hall of the House on November 9th, 1989, and was chaired by the Regional Director, Robin Mills. Those who had expressed interest in the Trust's plans for the future management of the Property attended further meetings at the House early in 1990, and from these was formed the original Committee of the "Friends".

A mail shot was sent out by the Trust to their members in the neighbourhood, and by August 1990, I, as Membership Secretary, was able to report that we had around 100 Members.

During the summer, some of us took part in the "Visitor Survey", carried out in the drive, which showed that over 300,000 people were making use of the Park in the course of a year.

I note from the Minutes of our meetings that the notorious "dips" formed across the drive, were even then causing adverse comment!

The "Friends" first Event was a Christmas Party in the Long Gallery (!), with entertainment by members of Ealing's Questors Theatre. At that time the House was still under the management of the V & A, who had immunity from the need to conform with Local Authority Licensing requirements.

Ten years on, the latest news is that our membership has reached the 300 mark, and we hope that this will continue to grow through the coming months. We hope, too, that these new members will be encouraged to take an active part, both in the activities of the "Friends" and as volunteers at the property.

I am becoming concerned about the work load which your small Committee is having to undertake. We need several more members so that the current load can be shared and capacity is available to take on new projects. At the moment, we go from year to year repeating the same pattern, with very little in the way of new initiatives.

I would be glad to hear from any member who feels they have the time and commitment to offer help in this way.



Elsewhere in this issue you will find news of the plans for this season at the Property, and also news of Jim Tickle's programme of day excursions and the 5 day tour of the West Country. These trips are always very popular, and early booking is essential!

News from the Property

Members of the Trust will have seen from the front page story in the Thames & Chiltern Newsletter that it is the intention to open the Ground Floor of the House to visitors on a free flow basis, rather than the escorted tours which have been the rule in past years. Several new rooms will be open, including Mrs Bunce's Room, which will house the albums of photographs and other memorabilia previously in the small room at the end of the South corridor.

The specially-woven carpet in the Yellow Taffeta Bedroom is now in place; it is hoped to lay a new carpet in the North Corridor, to compliment the one laid in the South Corridor in 1998.

The additional rooms on show will need additional Room Stewards, and Barry and Philip have been recruiting feverishly. There are still vacancies which would suit retired members or their friends, willing to spend a couple of afternoons a month in an interesting job among like minded people. No formal qualifications are required - not even O-level History! For further details contact **Philip King on 560-3918**.

Incidentally, Trust Members living in selected local Postcode areas will be receiving a "Mailshot" as part of this recruiting drive. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to flag the names of existing volunteers and delete them from the list!

There are other volunteer opportunities elsewhere at the Property. *The Jersey Galleries* on the Ground Floor have a full programme of exhibitions for the new season, commencing on April 19th with the return of the Society of Surrey Sculptors for their fifth exhibition at Osterley. This will be followed by shows by contemporary artists. Volunteers will be needed on Mondays and Tuesdays, when the exhibitions are being set up, for assistance with liaison and security, and will have the chance of "Sneak Previews"! You may even be able to quiz the artists on the meaning of some of the more abstract works! Contact **Christine Williams on 568-7714**.

The sale of National Trust Raffle Tickets at Osterley can provide valuable extra income for the Property. It is hoped to set up a Stall for this on Sunday afternoons during the season. Anyone willing to help should contact **Gudrun** on the number above.

Christine will again be Senior Recruiter during the new season, and hopes to beat the better-than-target performance of last year. To assist her, an **Assistant Recruiter** is needed, to work from 1 pm to 5 pm most weekends and Bank Holidays. This is a paid post, which will require an outgoing young person, who will enjoy meeting people, handling their applications, and receiving their payments. This might suit a student living locally. If you know any one who could be interested in this, ask them to ring **Gudrun on 568-7714** for further information.



Arrivals and Departures

Siobhàn Scullion has been appointed Visitor Services Manager. She was formerly House Steward for the Trust at Castle Coole in Northern Ireland.

The new House Steward at Osterley is **Megan Doole**, who joined the team on 24th January as the successor to Susie Keepin. Megan, originally from New Zealand, has been working for some years for the Trust and other heritage bodies in Bath. Both these ladies have contributed short "C.V.'s" which appear elsewhere in this issue.

The resignation of the Catering Manager, Steve Rawlings, means that post and that of Assistant Catering Manager are now vacant, Interviews are being held this month for replacements.

'Friends' Activities

The annual visit of choirs, singing Christmas Carols in the Stable-yard on Sundays, 5th & 12th December, attracted large crowds, and collections taken raised nearly £100 for the "Friends" Battery Car Maintenance Fund. Our thanks are due to Tony Underwood and Howard Stephens for arranging these, and to the members of the choirs who braved the cold to sing in the open air.

Our series of Winter Lectures is now in progress. Barry Williams talk on "Osterley Park - Identifying the Spirit of the Place" attracted a large audience and produced a lively discussion. We can also report an excellent turnout for Doris Sherwood's talk on Thomas Gresham, Merchant Adventurer and founder of Osterley and the Royal Exchange.

Hopefully this will reach you in time to remind you of Andrea Cameron's talk on Wednesday, 1st March, on the "Visits of Tudor & Stuart Monarchs to local Great Houses". This will be followed on the 15th March by Dennis Ashbourne, speaking about "Hampton Court Palace and the Fire of 1986". These will be given in St Mary's Parish Hall, Osterley Road, at 8 pm. Tickets will be available at the door, price £3.00.

Reception and Annual General Meeting

This will be held in the Brewhouse Restaurant at Osterley, on Wednesday, 17th May. The reception commences at 7 pm, when wine will be served. The formal business of the A.G.M. will begin at 7.45, hopefully taking no longer than 15 or 20 minutes, and will be followed by a talk - speaker and subject yet to be confirmed. Agenda and Reports will follow with our next issue in early May.

Donations

We have recently received a generous donation of £100 from **Heidelberg U.K. Ltd**, of Brentford. This will be used as a contribution to the cost of printing and distributing this Newsletter. A donation of £25 in the form of a voucher was also received from **Squires Garden Centre**. This was raffled at the Reception at the House in October.



National Trust Events

A copy of the Trust's leaflet giving details of all the events which they are planning for the New Season, together with booking arrangements, is enclosed with this Newsletter.

These include **"National Gardens Day"** on Sunday, 11th June. Regretfully, due to the pressure of other activities on your Committee Members, it is not possible for them to produce the volume of plants needed for a successful "Friends" Stall at this event, without a major input from the membership. Any member with "Green Fingers" willing not only to produce a large number of plants for this day but also to assist on the Stall should contact **Ian Conacher on 560-8523**.

Also in the Programme is **"Osterley Day"** on 9th July. Currently, we are hoping to provide a "Bric-a-Brac" Stall, a Tombola, and a Soft Drinks Stall - in hopes of just such a gloriously warm day as we had last year! Any further ideas for fund-raising Stalls will be welcomed - either simple ideas like "Guessing the Weight of the Cake", or hired stands for "Roll a penny" etc. Ideas and offers of help to your Chairman, on the number above.

A major event in the programme is the Open Air Theatre Presentation on 15th July by the Illyria Company. This year, they are performing *Romeo and Juliet*, and it will be interesting to see how the lively manner in which they have presented Shakespeare's comedies in previous years will be adapted for this tragedy.

Saturday, 5th August sees the Band Concert, with the return of the Glenn Miller Band for a programme of Forties music, followed by a Firework Display. Hopefully, with fine weather, this will again attract a large audience.

Spring Cleaning?

Please put aside any surplus items such as ornaments, vases, small pictures and other articles which can be recycled on the "Friends" **BRIC-A-BRAC STALL** or **TOMBOLA** on Osterley Day, July 9th.

Arrangements for collection will be given in our next issue.

Last year, your generosity enabled Audrey Coacher and Felicity Bernstein to raise over £560 for the "Friends" This year, we want to do even better!

Telephone Number Changes

As you may already know, all local numbers are due to change on 22nd April. The area code for both Inner London (0171) and Outer London (0181) are replaced by (020). In Inner London, all numbers will now have an additional 7 in front of the exchange code, and similarly in Outer London there will be an additional 8 before the exchange number. Thus 560-1234 becomes 8560-1234 for local calls. Use **020-8560-1234** only if calling from outside London.

All numbers quoted in this Newsletter are in the old format, and will have to be modified if calling after 22nd April.



The Club has been running for a year now, and achieved a total of 140 shares sold by the time of the 4th draw on 11th December at Osterley House.

The Prizes at this draw totalled a bumper £230. The first Prize of £100 went to a member who had requested anonymity. Second Prize of £50 went to Geoff Spice, and the third prize of £30 to E. Moores. Fourth Prize of £25 was won by M. Jenkins, Fifth of £15 by A. Beaumont, and Sixth of £10 by R. Stilliard.

The first draw of this year will be made at the Winter Lecture in St Mary's Hall on March 15th, for prizes totalling at least £195. The second draw will be at the A.G.M. on Wednesday, May 17th.

Of the 92 subscriptions due for renewal in January, 88 have already been renewed. Renewal notices are included with this Newsletter for those who joined between March and May last year.

New - and existing - Members of the "Friends" who have not yet joined the 100 Club may contact me at 27 Queens Road, Twickenham, TW1 4EZ. All applications received by 15th March will be included in the Draw on that day.



John deserves congratulations as the 100 club has raised £840 for the "Friends" and the National Trust!

Welcome to New Staff at Osterley

Megan Doole - Osterley House Manager, a profile.

Megan first came to Britain in 1990 during an 8 month European cycle-touring/travelling experience. She liked it so much that 1½ years after returning to New Zealand she decided to emigrate and try her chances in Bath.

After a couple of years in magazine print production she decided to switch to a career in tourism. Two years at the Roman Baths gave a firm footing in the visitor care aspect of heritage tourism; this has been developed by an HNC (Heritage Management), two years with Bath National Trust Shop, and administrating a small local Bath museum.

Her intention at Osterley is to use these existing, plus newly acquired skills to give visitors a "magic" experience.

Although leaving Bath after 7½ years is a wrench Megan is looking forward to sampling the delights of London.

She has kept up her interest in Roman history with archaeology study trips to Rome and the Bay of Naples (Pompeii, Herculanium, etc.) in recent years. Once established at Osterley, Heathrow will be calling!



Siobhán Scullion - Visitor Services Manager - a profile.

Realising that there was a shortage of Irish talent in London, I began late last year to think seriously about moving from the tranquillity of the Fermanagh Lakeland in Northern Ireland. It seemed to be a good omen that the very first (in fact only) job I applied for in London was the one I am now in.

I am not new to the Trust however, having spent a year and a half at Castle Coole in County Fermanagh, the magnificent family seat of the Earls of Belmore. As House Steward, my last official night there was spent on duty over Millennium Eve and I headed off the very next day for London.

While I was born in Tunbridge Wells I am of Irish Stock and we moved back to County Antrim when I was nine years old. My next big move was to Trinity College Dublin where I gained a degree in History of Art and Architecture with French. My interest in conservation then took me to Dundee University where I spent a wonderful year studying for a Masters Degree in European Urban Conservation.

I returned to Northern Ireland in 1995 and eventually landed a job in the marketing department of a volunteer bureau. I moved from there to the Visitor Centre of Hilden Brewing Company, which was certainly a job with perks! But I felt that I had left behind my love of conservation and architecture and wanted to develop a career in that field. I think that brings us back full circle to Castle Coole, which was my next move.

I am delighted to be at Osterley Park and look forward to what promises to be a remarkable year. On a final note I would like to thank all the staff and volunteers I have met so far who have made me feel most welcome.



Subscription Renewal

All "Friends" (except those joining since January 1st) are reminded that Annual Subscriptions are due by April 1st. For your convenience, our Membership Secretary hopes to be at the Winter Lectures on March 1st and 15th, so that you may renew in person. Otherwise, please use the Renewal Form included with this Newsletter.

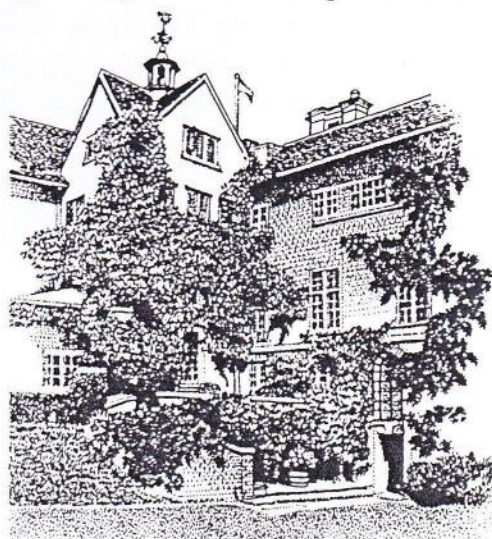
As evidenced by the Booking Form enclosed with this Newsletter, our programme of day-trips for the first Season of the new Millenium is now complete and arrangements for the September break are well in hand, - but more of that later! I am pleased once again to confirm that all the excursions are organised through European Heritage Tours with our faithful friend, Barrie Pyle, at the driving wheel.

This year's day-trips are as follows:

Thursday, 6th April ... Sherborne Castle & Abbey, Dorset
Friday, 12th May ... Chartwell & Historic Maidstone
Thursday, 8th June ... Prior Park & the City of Bath
Wednesday, 12th July ... Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire
Monday, 7th August ... Dover Castle & Chilham Village, Kent
Thursday, 5th October ... Eltham Palace

As usual, the coach will leave Osterley House car park promptly at 9.00 a.m., with the exception of the July outing to Derbyshire, which requires a prompt departure at 8.30 a.m. I feel sure, though, that you will agree that Hardwick Hall merits an early breakfast!

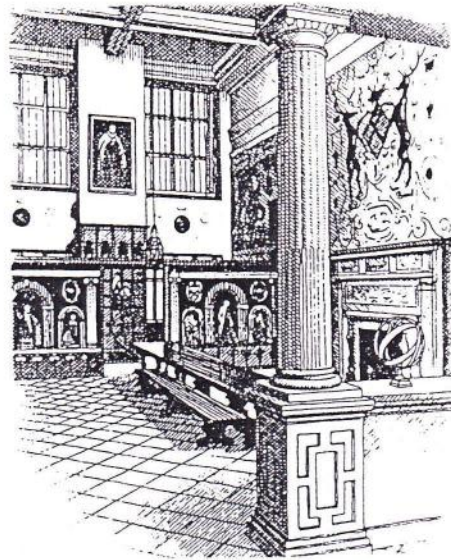
At Sherborne (April) we can expect an enthusiastic welcome from their Castle & Events Manager, Graham Rogers and Sally, our former Custodian at Osterley. The 'new' Sherborne Castle, built in 1594 by Sir Walter Raleigh, has been the home of the Digby family since 1617 and contains a fine selection of pictures, porcelain and furniture. The Gardens, extending over 20 acres around a 50 acre lake, were designed by 'Capability' Brown. Nearby, the Old, 12th Century Norman Castle is administered by English Heritage. And your day in Sherborne would not be complete without a visit to explore the magnificent Abbey, whose treasures include the earliest great fan vault in existence, medieval misericords, fine Tudor monuments and an engraved glass reredos by Whistler.



Chartwell (May), I'm sure needs little introduction as the rural retreat of Britain's former 'Man of Destiny', Sir Winston Churchill. Here, the great statesman relaxed and indulged in his pleasures of painting, tending his roses and even trying his hand at brick-laying! Our 11 a.m. entry time at Chartwell means that part of the afternoon can be spent discovering the hidden delights of Maidstone.

The visit to Prior Park Garden (June) draws us back to the splendid City of Bath, which some may recall from our 1996 October outing to Dyham Park. After a relaxed lunch in Bath, the coach drops us at the Landscape Garden, again designed by 'Capability' Brown in about 1760 and incorporating an earlier 'Wilderness Garden' designed by Twickenham resident poet, Alexander Pope. We are advised that there is no tea-room at Prior Park!

Don't miss the 8.30 a.m. start for Hardwick Hall (July). However, Barrie assures me that the journey is not too arduous and, being virtually all motorway, may not be as time-consuming as one might imagine. Built between 1590-97 by 'Bess of Hardwick', Countess of Shrewsbury, friend and confidante of Her Royal Namesake, Hardwick Hall is one of the grandest Elizabethan houses in Britain. Notable amongst its treasures are rich sixteenth and seventeenth century tapestries and fine needlework. The adjacent ruined Old Hall is administered by English Heritage, which is stongly featured in our last two day-trips of the Season , -- a good reason for joining them (and their annual subscription is much less than NT!)



Dover Castle EH (August) is far from being a bleak, empty shell. The great 12th Century Keep still stands guard over the English Channel and beneath lie miles of secret tunnels where you may visit the Second World War Army Command Centre and underground hospital and operating theatre, - a far cry from the peaceful serenity of Chilham, the charming Kentish village that we see en route to Dover. And, would you believe it!, when Sir Dudley Digges built his red-brick Jacobean mansion in the Castle grounds here in 1616, the park was laid out by none other than Launcelot 'Capability' Brown!

English Heritage's Eltham Palace (October) offers a unique experience for our final outing of the Season. From the early fourteenth century it was one of the largest and most frequented royal residences in the country, but of that proud building all that remains intact is the restored Great Hall, completed by Edward IV in 1480. However, in the 1930s the estate was acquired by Stephen and Virginia Courtauld, who set about creating a modern home on the site of nineteenth century buildings, whilst retaining as much as possible of the royal palace. The result is spectacular; the exteriors of the ancient and modern buildings blend in perfect harmony, whilst the design and quality of the 1930s interiors is quite breathtaking. I had hoped to combine our visit to Eltham with yet another English Heritage property, the Ranger's House in Blackheath, but it will be closed for essential conservation work in early Autumn. Meanwhile, Barrie and I are considering other suitable options.

The September Break

In response to popular appeal, we are able to extend our annual break to FIVE days from Wednesday, 6th to Sunday, 10th of September. I have reserved single en suite rooms at the University of Exeter on our usual half-board basis (Dinner, Bed and Breakfast). Details of the proposed programme of our forray into Glorious Devon can be found on the enclosed leaflet and if you wish to reserve a place, please return the reservation slip as soon as possible. Numbers, alas, are limited.