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The Friends of Osterley Park



A Supporters Group for the National Trust

Issue 38

September 2000

Chairman's Notes

Ian Conacher

The Millennium Season is now well advanced, and has brought the usual annual crop of triumphs and set-backs - but fortunately no disasters!

On the Membership front, there has been a disappointing fall in numbers, occasioned partly by long standing members leaving the district and also by some new members, living at a distance and failing to renew. We do need to build up a strong base of local residents who regularly visit the Property, and who would appreciate the information about personalities, events and proposed developments which is given in our Newsletter. Members can assist in this by showing the Newsletter to like-minded friends and neighbours and persuading them to join.

One of the requirements of our Constitution is that we provide a channel for communication with the management of the Trust. The close working relationship which has been built up between myself and other members of the Committee with Barry Williams and his staff at Osterley allows us to discuss with them proposed developments, and raise matters of concern to members and the local community.

Our Annual General Meeting on May 17th was well attended, even though many of those who had indicated their intention to come did not show up, possibly due to the wet weather at that time. The Minutes of the Meeting are attached; these are evidence of a major triumph, as they have been prepared by our new Minute Secretary, Irene Bowles. Irene was elected to the Committee at the A.G.M., and has not only taken an onerous duty off the Chairman's shoulders, but has also assisted with Felicity's Tombola stall on "Osterley Day" and with the help of her family has stewarded at the Jazz Concert and Open Air Theatre. We hope that we can persuade more younger members to follow her example and give time to the running of the "Friends".

On the financial side, the "Friends" are continuing to provide support for various Trust projects. Funds given and pledged this season now total over £4,000, and include the provision of over £1,000 for equipment for the Education Centre.

The "100 Club", run by John Robertson, has brought in over £800 to the "Friends", to

be used for the benefit of the Trust. We hope that members will continue to support this, and we would also like to hear from any member willing to assist John with this and eventually take over the operation.

Major Trust Events.

The poor weather at the beginning of this season did not have any direct effect on most of the Trust's events in the Park - although a large number of potential customers may well have been reluctant to book in advance due to uncertainty over the weather prospects.

Pete Allen and his Jazz Band gave a memorable performance of traditional numbers to an appreciative audience on June 17th, which led to calls for "Encores" and for a return visit next season!

The "Illyria" Company gave a presentation of "Romeo and Juliet" on 15th July; the production was in their usual vigorous style, but I was left wondering whether this was really suited to a classic tragedy.

The major Trust event of the season was the Big Band Concert on August 5th, given by the "Glenn Miller Band", now under the direction of Ray McVay. The programme included many old favourites from the 'forties and 'fifties, some of which were strictly outside the Miller repertoire, but were well received by the audience, many of whom were dancing on the driveway in front of the House. Their enthusiasm encouraged Ray to continue playing longer than scheduled, which threatened losing the time window agreed with Heathrow for the Firework Display! However, this was able to go ahead, and was one of the best we have seen, enhanced by an orchestral accompaniment!

Of course, the law of averages dictates that one cannot "win them all"! This was demonstrated on "Osterley Day", July 9th, which dawned grey and overcast. However, stallholders set up their stands, and local artists hung their works on the Park railings. There was some drizzle during the morning and early afternoon, but at about 4 pm the heavens opened and we were saturated. The day ended with Felicity Bernstein and Audrey Conacher packing wet goods from the Tombola and Bric-a-Brac stalls into wet boxes - and going home for a hot bath and a change of clothes!

In spite of this the stalls took respectively £320 and £265, which compares well with previous years. Our thanks are due to both ladies and their teams of helpers.

Another Fund-raising Opportunity!

The "Friends" Tombola and Bric-a-Brac Stalls will be returning to the Park for the Regional Open Day, as we have already a fair quantity of goods salvaged from the downpour on Osterley Day. Hopefully, in spite of the short notice, these can be supplemented by additional donations from members - ornaments, costume jewellery, unwanted gifts, books (particularly recent hardbacks), etc. Members are asked to contact Audrey Conacher on (020)-8560-8523 to arrange collection.

Regional Open Day, Sunday, 10th September.

Each year, a Property within the Thames and Chiltern Region is chosen to "showcase" the work of the Trust. This year, it is the turn of Osterley Park - an honour which was last enjoyed here in 1992.

Events will include demonstrations of conservation of furniture and artifacts, flower arranging, management and conservation of landscape, and of bee-keeping. Children's activities will include pond dipping, face painting, and dowsing. There will be free car parking, free admission to the House, with guided tours, and also tours of the Park and Gardens.

This promises to be a "Grand Day Out" - so bring all your friends and neighbours, children and grandchildren to see and enjoy what Osterley Park has to offer.

Developments in the Park.

Perhaps the most noticeable change which visitors encounter is the new Kiosk, serving ice cream and drinks, and operated by the Trust's tea room staff. This replaces the commercially owned van which had attracted complaints about the fumes from its Diesel generator.

The temporary fencing around the causeway at the east end of the Garden Lake has been replaced by park railings: this will give the planting in this area time to become established. Some of the temporary fencing between the willow tree and the path to the overflow Car Park has also been taken down.

During a walk with a group of volunteers, Barry Williams spoke of long term planning for improvements to the approach to the Park from Wyke Green and Osterley Lane. The wrought iron gates, designed by Robert Adam, which originally hung between the lodges, are at present in store in the Stables. It is hoped that these can be restored and re-hung, together with improvements to the paving and fencing of Osterley Lane. This will allow visitors arriving by this route to re-live the 18th Century experience, glimpsing the House across the lake before it becomes hidden by trees. There is, however, no intention of making this the main visitor access to the Property.

Alan Rideout - Assistant House Steward

Since last April when I was lucky enough to be chosen as the new Assistant House Steward at Osterley, I have met and become friends with many of you who are Friends of Osterley House and work so hard supporting the N.T. in so many ways. I feel I can share an affinity with those of you who are volunteers as I myself have the privilege of being a voluntary steward, of 25 years standing, at St. George's Chapel, Windsor Castle.

Some of you have already met my wife Elizabeth. We have one son, Nick, and he and his partner Angela have recently blessed us with a noisy grand-daughter Isabelle, whom some of you have also met!

I came to Osterley from Heathrow Airport where I spent 27 years as a building maintenance engineer caring for the various buildings belonging to British Airways,

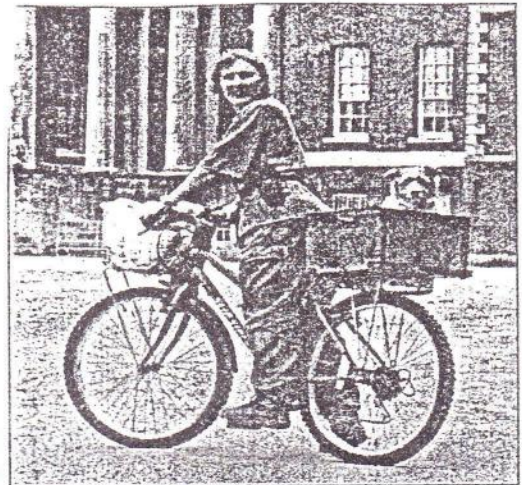
and I'm sure that the experience that I have gained over the years will stand me in good stead in my present position.

To return briefly to St. George's Chapel, it was in 1975 that I first became involved as a steward when the chapel was celebrating its quincentenary with a programme of events throughout that year including an exhibition in the summer. Many firm friendships were made among those of us who were involved during that year and this became the nucleus of the voluntary organisation that now exists to support and promote the chapel, not only in its historical context but also as a Christian fellowship.

I would like to extend my thanks to all of you for helping me through my first few months at Osterley and look forward to a happy working relationship for the future.

The article below, written by Gary Bradley, one of the Car Park Attendants at Osterley, was first published in the N.T. Staff's Regional Newsletter.

Gary's picture shows Nathalie Muller, Head Warden, on her new bicycle, with Ted in his special rear seat.



Four Legged Warden Takes to Two Wheels

As part of the new cleaner, greener transport policy at Osterley, it was recently decided that the wardens would patrol the grounds by bicycle.

At first this seemed like it might pose a problem for "Ted the Terrier", who for the past five years, has patrolled Osterley Park on a golfing buggy with warden Nathalie Muller. Ted had visions of having to run alongside Nathalie's bike to keep up, or worse still, having to hang up his wardens badge altogether and take up an office job!

Fortunately the problem was quickly resolved by adding this "doggy top box" (patent pending) to Nathalie's bike.

As Ted says "It's a bit Heath Robinson, but at least I get to put my paws up while Nathalie does all the leg work."

Just like Osterley Park, Ted the terrier has an interesting history. He was found tied up outside the tea rooms at Osterley in 1994, after his owners abandoned him there. Since then he has become a much loved member of the team at Osterley, not only with the staff and volunteers, but also the visitors, some of whom come especially to see Ted.

Nathalie says "Ted is great for public relations at Osterley. One day last year, while I was patrolling the park with Ted on the buggy, a group of visitors stopped me to ask if they could take photos of Ted. They said they were from New York and had come to the park to see Ted because their boss had been the year before and had told them what a great dog he was. Apparently their boss even had pictures of Ted in his

office".

Ted is also becoming a bit of a celebrity on the Internet since he launched his own Internet site. Recently he was voted "Cool Dog of the Day" by another popular website in Japan. You can visit Ted's official site and find out more about his life at: www.uksafari.com/ted



Tales from the Lakeside - The Cygnet

Kevin Mills

Those of you who are regular visitors to the grounds here at Osterley may have noticed that recently one of the cygnets had gone A.W.O.L. She has in fact been recovering from nasty injuries sustained in an attack by a dog.

Alerted by one of Osterley's regular dog walkers, Linda the head gardener found her dying on the lake bank just beyond the mound. We immediately rushed her to our vet in Thornbury Road, where she received emergency treatment to stabilise her condition.

She was in severe shock, with dog bites the length of her neck and a hole torn in one wing. The first 24 hours were crucially important if she was going to survive but with the help of intravenous drips, massive injections of steroids and antibiotics, as well as rehydration by tube, she pulled through and began to slowly gain strength.

From then on she was cared for by Linda in the Grand Stables, being tube fed with babyfood every three or four hours and kept warm and immobilised in our daughter's old play pen.

After a week or so, she was strong enough to resume feeding herself and she was given the freedom of one of the stalls in the stables.

Frequent visits to the vet for check ups and further injections, brought curious glances from passers-by and the other patients in the surgery!

As her recovery continued we wondered if she would be able to rejoin her family on the Lake, but we need not have worried.

On our last trip to the vets, to remove the stitches from her wing, we happened upon the rest of the family and our swan recognised them and much calling and squeaking followed, evidently the bond was still strong. We kept her for just one more night and the following morning we said our goodbyes and drove to the lake bank not far from where we had found her weeks before. As luck would have it, the family were nearby and without so much as a backward glance, our swan was re-united on the lake....She sticks very close to her parents now.

Tales from the Lakeside 2. The Duckling



Alerted by a visitor, we were called to the bellmouth overflow, on the Garden Lake where a Mallard and her brood of three young ducklings were feeding in and around the water lilies - one had strayed inside the wooden surround and promptly fell down the pipe!

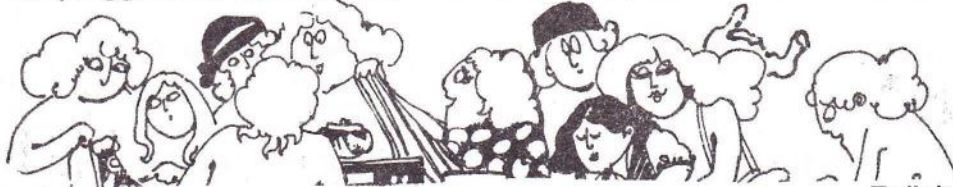
When we arrived, the mother and two remaining ducklings were calling to the now stranded one, which we could hear at the bottom of the pipe.

We stood on the causeway and gathered our thoughts...a plan was hatched. We returned, with tools for the job, Nathalie and Gary were despatched to the far end of the pipe where it issues into the bigger lake. There they waited armed only with a fishing net from the School study base.

Back at the bellmouth Linda and myself commenced phase 2 of the plan, which consisted of us bucketing as much water as we could down the pipe, as fast as we could. A few seconds later, propelled by a torrent of water, out popped the duckling into the net. (Thorpe Park eat your heart out!)

Said duckling was returned to the brood, none the worse for his adventure.

Finally we plugged the hole in the timber surround, just in case he fancied another go!



The Tombola Stall

Felicity Bernstein

"The Friends" are always seeking new ways to raise funds for the support of Osterley. Three years ago I suggested a Tombola Stall to go alongside the famous Bric-a-Brac stall on Osterley Day in July. It has been a great experience!

The hard part is collecting enough "prizes". X number of things is £X for Osterley, as every number is a winner - unlike some lotteries. I beg friends and relations and the results vary. One or two people have a great clear-out, others may only produce one or two things, all very welcome. Soft toys can be bought from Charity Shops and are wanted. I buy bargain packs of soft drinks and sweets from the supermarket, not chocolate however as we had a meltdown one hot day.

Boxes and bags clutter up house and garage for weeks, and then everything must be numbered and written down on a check list. I make cakes and biscuits to swell the ranks, and people are glad to win them and a canned drink when the Osterley Tea Room has a long queue. We pray for good weather, of course, and are grateful to Jim Tickle for the use of his gazebo for shelter.

The best part is enjoying the children's excitement as they take a lucky dip in the tin, pull out a number and search for their prize. One year a dear little girl of ten ran through her pocket money but could not bear to leave, so she stayed on as a helper and was wonderfully quick at spotting the corresponding numbers on the table. I hope she comes back!

The strange thing is how often people seem to win appropriate things. The children pick up the toys, books and games, and the adults the wine and spirits. Will power works as well - one was determined to win a can of tennis balls and did so on his fourth try. The odds against are large with three or four hundred possibles, but the oddest of all was a severely disabled man in a wheelchair - he pointed to a can of lager he wanted to win. His helper picked a folded number out of the tin and it was the very one - quite spooky.

Our new committee member, Irene was a great help on the stall this year and we were delighted when her son won a lantern he really wanted on the third try. There

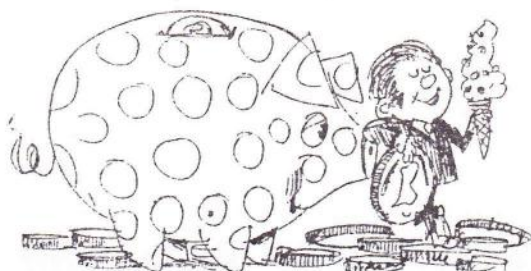
were many more instances like this. One man lacked the magic touch and although he kept trying to win a bottle of whisky he kept winning food and easily accumulated enough tins and bottles for a meal.

This year the weather was drizzly, but people came bravely with umbrellas, and we were doing well until a real deluge at four o'clock made everyone run for cover and we had to give up. Both stalls have enough good things to do it all again on Sunday 10th September, so come and try your luck!

Summer Visits 2000.

Jim Tickle advises that these have all been well attended. The trip to Dover Castle on 7th August was blessed with good weather and provided a strenuous day, full of interest to the party. Some even asked for a return visit!

The Tour of the West Country, setting off on 6th September, is fully booked. We hope that this Newsletter will arrive in time to convey our good wishes for the success of this trip.



100 Club

John Robertson

The second 100 Club draw of the year was held at the A.G.M. on 17th May. We were able to maintain the 140 minimum just at the last moment after appealing to the meeting. The prizes were therefore kept at their present level.

First Prize - £100 was won by M. C. Cooper (no. 96)

Second Prize - £50 went to H. Stephens (no. 80)

Third Prize - £30 to C. Diwell (no. 78)

Fourth Prize - £20 to D. B. Shadbolt (no. 90)

Fifth Prize - £15 to J. Dingwall (no. 44)



The third draw will be made at the "Friends" Autumn Event on Wednesday 11th October at Osterley House.

We now have 142 subscriptions - 2 more than last year. It would be nice to increase this amount to at least 150 by the end of the year. I have promised our chairman that I will run the 100 Club for the next year despite the fact that I will be retiring from the Committee. However, it would be nice if someone came forward to run it with me for the year ensuring a smooth transition.

A year's subscription to the 100 Club costs only £1 per month and even if you don't win you will have the satisfaction of raising funds for Osterley House!

If you wish to join us please complete a request form and send it to me. As long as I receive it by 11th October it will be in time for the next draw.

Good Luck to you and see you at the Autumn meeting!

Christmas Carols in the Stable Yard.

Our regular Choirmasters, Tony Underwood and Howard Stephens, have once more volunteered to present programmes of Christmas music, weather permitting, in the Stable yard on Sundays, 10th and 17th December, commencing at 2.30 pm.

On the 10th, Tony will lead a choir made up of members of the West London Opera, and on the 17th, Howard will conduct members of the St. Mary's Singers.

A collection will be taken for the "Friends" Battery Car Maintenance Fund, which covers the cost of keeping these self-drive vehicles on the road for the benefit of those with walking difficulties who wish to explore the Park.

Invitation

Friend's Members Reception - Wednesday, 11th October.

This will commence at 7pm, when, weather permitting, a glass of wine will be served in the Private Garden behind the west wing of the Stable Block. We will then move into the Old Brewhouse, where at 8 pm Barry Williams and Philip King will give a slide show describing "A Day in the Life of a Property Manager".

The evening will conclude with the Draw for prize winners in the "100 Club".

Members may park their cars in the Stable Yard, and are asked to arrive before 7.30, while the Car Park attendant is on duty to open the automatic barrier! Latecomers will have to walk up the drive!