



The Friends of Osterley Park



IAN

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 40

FEBRUARY 2001

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER, 2000.

Ian Conacher

At the beginning of each year, I have in the past taken on two tasks - to write not only notes for the Newsletter, but also the formal "Chairman's Report" for the Annual General Meeting. This year I have decided to roll the two tasks into one.

The year 2000 was a good one for the "Friends", both financially and socially. Final Accounts are now with the Honourary Examiner, and show a very healthy situation. During the year, we have made donations of nearly £2,600 to the Trust, and pledged a further £1,765 for projects in the pipeline. A balance of approximately £3,000 is being carried over into this year to fund further donations.

These results have been achieved as a result of increased income from a number of sources. Membership has increased to 365 with a corresponding increase in subscription income. The number of shares held in the "100 Club" has increased to 155, giving an income for the Trust's benefit of £930. "Winter Lectures" were well attended, and the programme of day and weekend outings was well supported; although not run as profit-making ventures, these have both made useful contributions. The income from our fund-raising stalls on Osterley Day in July was below expectations due to bad weather, which depressed attendances. Fortunately, we were able to set up our stalls again at the Regional Open Day in September, which nearly doubled the total income; this of course is a "one off" which is not likely to be repeated!

None of this would have been possible without the hard work and dedication of your Committee, and my thanks are due to all of them for their support. New committee member Irene Bowles, who volunteered as Minute Secretary at last year's A. G. M., has produced impeccable records of our meetings, which has greatly reduced the work load of the Chairman.

However, as advised last year, our Committee, already below the number laid down in the Constitution, is now faced with two further vacancies.

Jim Tickle and John Robertson have both confirmed that they will not be standing for re-election at the A. G. M. Jim, who has organised the programme of day trips and, more recently, weekend tours, since 1993, has prepared a schedule for this season, which will be his last.

John Robertson, who founded the "100 Club" two years ago, has also given notice of his intention to stand down at the A. G. M. Fortunately, it seems probable that a volunteer has been found to take over the running of the Club - but not the vacancy on the Committee!



For some years past we have been running with only 8 members. We cannot go on without filling not only the seats vacated by Jim and John but also the 2 longer-standing vacancies - nor can I go on without shedding some of the additional duties which I have taken on in the past. We are becoming increasingly re-active - going through the same programme year after year - rather than pro-active, seeking new challenges in fund raising events and activities for members. We need fresh blood to share the work load and develop new enterprises.

Without new members on the Committee, the very future of the "Friends" is in jeopardy. I trust that members will come forward to ensure the continuing activity of the "Friends".

Committee Vacancies

Our Constitution calls for a Committee of 10 Members, comprising Chairman, Vice Chairman, Minute Secretary, Treasurer, and Membership Secretary, plus five other members.

All of the Officers are prepared to stand again, with the exception of Jim Tickle, our Vice Chairman - something of a sinecure while I retain my health and strength! However, with the passage of time, this situation may change, and I would be much happier to have a younger member on the Committee, who would in due course take up this post, and ultimately take over the Chair from me.

The Constitution calls for five Committee Members. Felicity Bernstein and Margaret Friday are both standing for re-election - but there are three vacant seats to be filled - four including the Vice Chairmanship.

New members will be asked to take on some of the jobs to be filled, which include :-

Outings organiser - preparing and leading the annual programmes of day trips and tours, in succession to Jim Tickle.

Publicity & Recruitment Officer - keeping in touch with the Press, preparing & distributing posters , etc. - work currently done by the Chairman

Events Organiser - Developing new ideas for public and members' activities.

In addition, help is required with the Newsletter - gathering and writing copy, and passing the drafts to Margaret Friday for "typesetting", arranging printing, collation, packing and distribution, much of which is done by the Chairman!

We enclose the Agenda for the A. G. M. on May 2nd, at which elections to the new Committee will take place. Between now and the A. G. M., I would hope to hear from members who feel that they could fill these vacancies and contribute to the work of the Committee and in particular from some of those who have enjoyed Jim's trips and feel inspired to take over from him.

Carols in the Stable Yard.

Sunday, 10th December dawned wet and windy, so much so that there were serious doubts about the viability of Open Air performances by choirs exposed to the elements in the Stable yard. By mid-day, however, conditions had improved, and after telephone conversations between the Chairman, Tony Underwood, the conductor for the day, and the House Staff, it was agreed that we would proceed, with the option of withdrawing into the Brewhouse if conditions became intolerable.

In the early afternoon, conditions improved, although a chilly west wind was still blowing. Undaunted, Tony led a choir of about 20 voices in some familiar Christmas Carols, with support from an audience of approximately 80 visitors.

The following Sunday, December 17th, was dry, with less wind, although the air temperature was in the low 40's Fahrenheit. Howard Stephens led about 30 choristers with woodwind accompaniment, with a similar programme and much audience participation.

During each afternoon, collections were taken among the audience to raise funds for the "Friends" commitment to meet the annual cost of upkeep of the small fleet of self-drive battery electric vehicles which enable less-mobile visitors to explore the Park in the spring and summer months. This yielded the welcome total of £175. Additionally, the Trust's tea room and shop benefitted from increased custom on the two days.

Thanks are due to the Tea Room Management for providing cups of hot tea for the choirs after the performances.

Summer Events 2001

Members of the Trust will have received with their Magazine the Thames & Chilterns Regional Newsletter, which incorporates the Regional Events Leaflet. This gives details of major events at Osterley. The staff at Osterley have now produced a leaflet covering not only the major items, but also the local events, including the programme for Exhibitions in the Jersey Galleries.

Major Events include not only the Glenn Miller Band Concert on 4th August and the return visit of the Pete Allen Jazz Band on 14th July, but also Osterley Day on July 15th. The "Friends" will as usual have a presence at this with the Bric-a-Brac and Tombola stalls. We are still looking for other attractions for the day - small fund-raising stalls which will add to the festive atmosphere!

In addition to the Art in the Park displayed on the railings on the Sunday, Heston Art Group will be holding an Exhibition and sale of work in the Garden Gallery from the 15th to the 22nd July.



A February Nature Ramble at Osterley

Garry Bradley

You may be asking yourself, why would anyone want to go rambling around Osterley Park in one of the coldest months of the year. There would have to be a good reason right?

Well firstly, most people will be thinking the same thing, and so it's going to be pretty quiet! If you come between Monday and Friday there are very few visitors about (except during school holidays) which makes for a much more relaxed and peaceful experience.

Secondly, the days are getting longer now, and the plants and animals of the Park are starting to wake up again after a brief winter rest.

Take for example the Great Crested Grebes. February is the time for their amazing courtship display. This involves a lot of head shaking, to fluff out and enhance their beautiful crest feathers. Both the male and the female dive under the surface to fill their beaks with pondweed. Then they raise themselves out of the water, breast to breast, by paddling very rapidly. The water froths madly around their feet, and their bodies rise up, resembling a couple of penguins.

The whole display is like an aquatic ballet, and certainly a lot more interesting than watching daytime television with 'Richard and Judy'!



Thirdly, you know the exercise will do you good. So if you're feeling brave, just wrap up warm, grab your wellies, and get down to the Park. Here are a few more sights you'll be rewarded with this month.

Woodpeckers - Pecking

Great spotted woodpeckers are making themselves heard in the South West Woods now. The males are performing their annual territorial drumming solo. This is to warn other males to keep out of their patch. They do this by striking their beak against a dead branch about 15 times in under a second. Because this is done high in the tree tops, it produces a resonating drum sound, which echoes all around the woods.

The fourth draw of the year 2000 was held at the Volunteers Christmas Party on December 2nd. The number of shares held on the day had increased to 156, and the prizes totalled £260 including an additional £30.

Winners were;-

1st	£100	Share No 145	A. Graham
2nd	£60	Share No 123	A. Beaumont
3rd	£40	Share No 14	P. & M. Bush
4th	£25	Share No 67	G. & E. Daniel.
5th	£20	Share No 52	Mr & Mrs McGale
6th	£15	Share No 140	M. Carr



The first draw of the New Year will take place at St Mary's Church Hall, Osterley, following the last of our Winter Lectures on March 21st. At the moment, we have 137 paid-up shares, and are still awaiting renewals from 13 share-holders who were sent reminders with the December Newsletter. Please pay up before 21st March!

Subscription renewals for June are enclosed with this Newsletter.

The second draw of the year will be on 2nd May, after the A.G.M.

Our thanks are due to existing members for their continuing support. As you know, half your subscription goes to the "Prize Fund", and the other half finances payments to the Trust for projects at Osterley. Last year, we raised £930 in this way - and all for a subscription which is less than the cost of a theatre ticket!

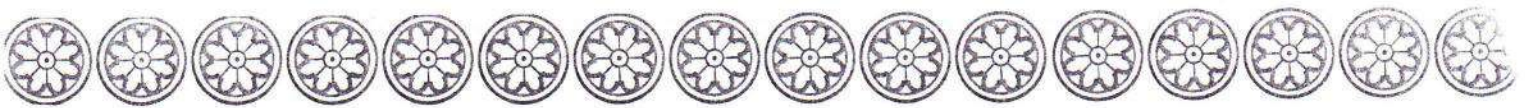
New members who wish to join the Club and participate in this draw should complete the Application Form and send it to me with a cheque for £12 made out to "Friends of Osterley Park" by 21st March.

Alternatively, I shall be at the Winter Lectures on both 7th and 21st March, ready to receive your subscriptions! Good Luck to all our investors!

National Gardens Day, 10th June.

As usual, the Trust will be opening the Walled garden to the public, as well as the Pleasure Grounds. We have been asked if we can organise a stall for the sale of Members' plants. This will be dependent on the support we receive from the Membership, as the Committee cannot on their own produce an adequate stock. Any members who are interested in providing stock for sale on the day are asked to contact the Chairman as soon as possible, so we can reach an early decision on the viability of this project!





Osterley Day, July 15th.

Once again, we shall be setting up our "Bric-a-Brac" and "Tombola" stalls on this day. These rely on solely on donations from members, and we shall glad to receive offers of fine china, vases, ornaments, costume jewellery and unwanted gifts! Hardback and paperback books are also welcome.

So, if you are having a spring cleaning clear-out, put things aside for this event, and contact Audrey Conacher with your offers. We can arrange collection nearer the time.

Liz Purnell

We were saddened to learn of the sudden death of Liz Purnell on 29th January. Liz had been a member of the team of volunteer gardeners growing flowers for the House since 1991, and also a member of the "Friends" from shortly after their formation. She was a regular supporter of "Friends" activities taking part in trips and social events. She will be greatly missed, and our sympathies go to her friends and family.

Committee News

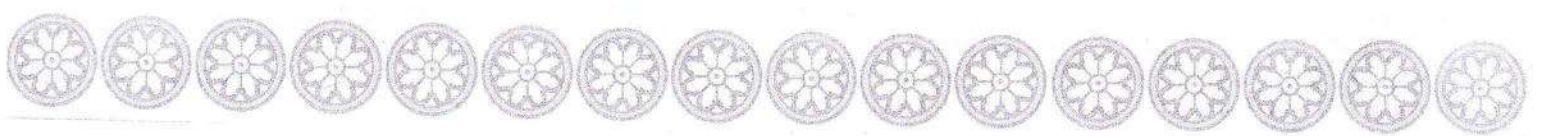
Jim Tickle is continuing to make good progress following major heart surgery, and has been occupied with the preparation of the plans for Friends & Volunteers outings for the coming season. Details of this - his last - programme are given on another page.

Felicity Bernstein's husband, Clive, has also recently undergone major surgery. We understand that he is now convalescing at home and wish him a speedy recovery.

Data Protection Act

In accordance with the requirements of the Act, we have to advise members that our membership records are stored on computer. The information will be used solely for the purposes of the "Friends", and will not be passed to any third party for any purpose whatsoever.





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Bumble Bees - Buzzing

Female bumble bees take to the air now. After spending the winter without food, they are pretty hungry, and their number one priority will be to find nectar amongst the early spring flowers. They will already have been fertilised last year, and once their appetite has been satisfied, they will be looking for a suitable nest site to lay their eggs. The nest is often an old disused mouse hole.

Snowdrops - Blooming

The arrival of the snowdrop flowers is generally considered a sign that winter is coming to an end as the flowers close at night, and open in the morning to attract the early insects. I'm told, if you put the tip of your tongue inside a snowdrop after it has been open for a while you can taste the sweet nectar inside. However, with all the dogs that visit Osterley, this is not an experiment I would recommend you try!

Other February bloomers include the glossy yellow 'lesser celandine', which can be seen carpeting the woodland floor, and the 'dog violets' with their attractive little purple blooms.

Hérons - Nesting

Grey herons usually nest in same place year after year, often in large colonies, and Osterley has quite a large heronry situated on 'the island' at the north end of the 'middle lake'. This month you can see the herons bringing fresh sticks to restore last years nest. This continues for some months, but now is the best time to see it while the trees are leafless.

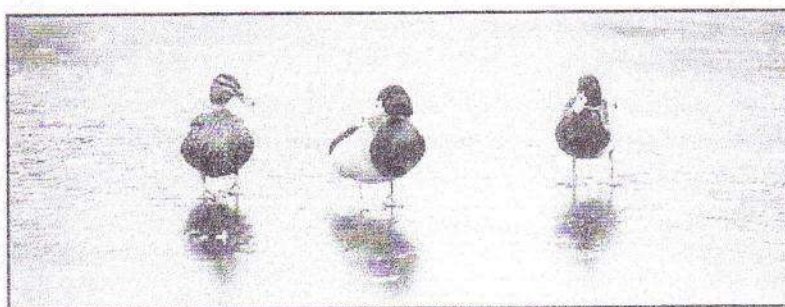
Frogs and Toads - Spawning

Every year, at about the same time, frogs and toads head for the lakes, where they developed from egg to tadpole to adult. Sometimes you can see them walking across country, but if you look around the shaded edges of the middle lake you will also see the spawn they produce.

Of course there's plenty more to see, and Nathalie Muller, the Assistant Warden at Osterley, regularly posts detailed notes, explaining what's about, on a large map in the information point.

Hopefully this will get you motivated enough to investigate for yourself, but if not, you can take an armchair safari by visiting my web site at
<http://www.uksafari.com/friends.htm>

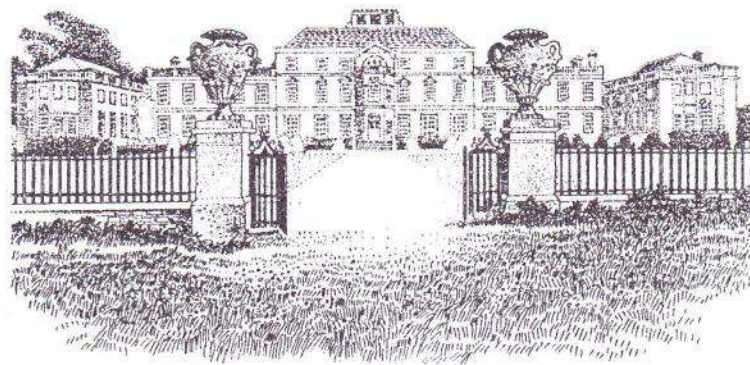
There you'll find photos and more information about all the items mentioned in this article.



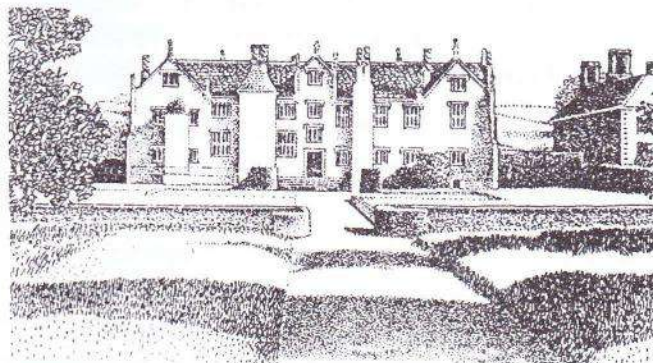
Thanks, in large part, to the profusion of get-well wishes from so many Friends after my recent heart surgery, I am now eager and fit enough to have started planning this year's excursions programme. Needless to say, our invaluable friend Barrie Pyle of European Heritage Tours will again be our driving force for all the day-trips and our now annual September break. Since we have practically exhausted the number of Trust properties within a day's drive from Osterley, we are proposing return visits to three places that proved very popular in much earlier years. The day-trips this year are therefore as follows:

- Thursday, 26th April: **Wimpole Hall and Farm**, Cambridgeshire
- Monday, 21st May: **Barrington Court**, Somerset
- Tuesday, 19th June: **Tattershall Castle**, Lincolnshire
- Friday, 13th July: **Cirencester & Chedworth Roman Villa**, Gloucestershire
- Monday, 13th August: **Hidcote Manor Gardens**, Gloucestershire
- Wednesday, 10th October: **Lacock Abbey & Castle Combe Village**, Wiltshire

Our most seasoned travellers may recall that we first visited Wimpole in May, '94. The Hall, contemporary with Osterley, holds magnificent work by Soane, Gibbs and Flitcroft and the park contains several features by Repton. Your visit to Wimpole would surely not be complete without a tour of the Farm, which houses an



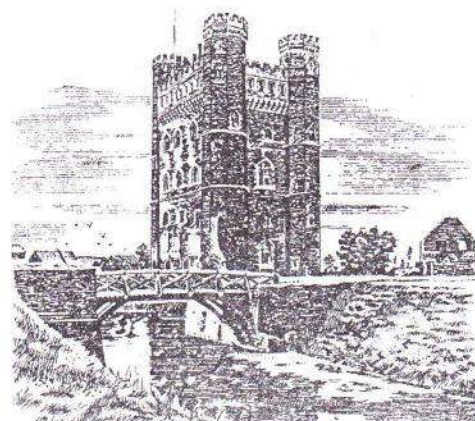
extensive collection of rare-breed animals and, in the Great Barn, a very interesting exhibition of antique farming implements, dating back to over 200 years.



In this, the National Trust 'Year of the Garden', Barrington Court must be an obvious choice to visit. The Gertrude Jekyll garden is laid out in a series of walled rooms which include a White Garden, Rose and Iris Garden and a Lily Garden. The Tudor manor house, restored in 1920, is now let to Stuart Interiors as showrooms with antique furniture for sale. Be warned though,

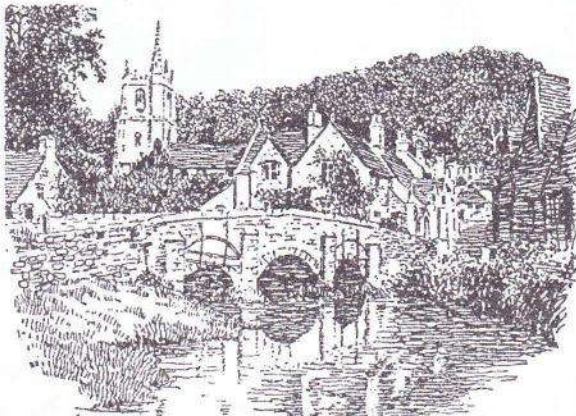
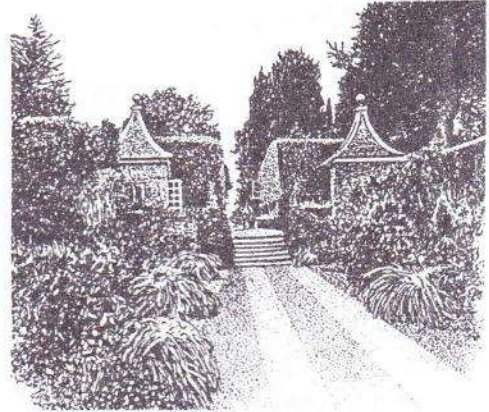
before you are tempted to buy! The coach cannot transport beds and wardrobes etc!

Despite the long drive to Tattershall Castle, the visit should be a most memorable one. The medieval castle was built for Ralph Cromwell, Lord Treasurer of England, and it was restored just before World War I by Lord Curzon. Inside its vast moated red-brick tower are four great chambers with enormous Gothic fireplaces and tapestries. Free audio guides are supplied and the views from the battlements are spectacular!



Apart from several fine mosaics, bathhouses, hypocausts, a water-shrine and even a latrine are amongst the visitor attractions of Chedworth Roman Villa. One of the largest Romano-British villas in the country, Chedworth was excavated in 1864 and it still retains a slight Victorian atmosphere. A new 15-minute audiovisual presentation, however, provides today's visitors with a modern insight into the villa's historic past. Also, on our journey through the Cotswolds, time will be spent in the old 'Wool' town of Cirencester, built on the Fosse Way and also rich in Roman remains. Cirencester's Parish Church is a rich, impressive building of Cathedral proportions thanks largely to the former prosperity of the local woollen trade.

Our previous visit to Hidcote Gardens in June, '94 was sadly marred by rainy weather, but hopefully this year's August visit will be blessed with sunnier skies. Again, the garden is divided into a series of 'rooms' separated by walls or hedges of different species. The plant collection at Hidcote is one of the most comprehensive outdoor collections in the country, - including species from all over the world. Also during the day, we will spend some time in the picturesque market town of Chipping Campden.



Our last outing this season repeats, in part, our very first day-trip way back in 1993. Then, we called at the village of Heddington, birthplace of the Child family, before visiting Lacock, where a recent television production of "Pride and Prejudice" was filmed. The Abbey was converted into a country house in 1540 but retains its medieval cloisters, sacristy and chapter house. The large Gothic Hall was added in 1754 by the Talbot family. The nearby museum is

dedicated to William Fox Talbot (1800-77), a pioneer in the science of photography. After our visit to Lacock, we hope to spend a little time exploring Castle Combe, one of Wiltshire's most attractive villages. *(Illustrated above)*

This Year's five-day break

Our five-day break, now an established feature, this year delves into the many, often unnoticed attractions of Shropshire. Much Wenlock, Ludlow, Bridgnorth, Shrewsbury

and the fascinating museums of Ironbridge are just a few. We'll visit Attingham and stray across the Welsh border to see mighty Powis Castle. Boscobel, where Charles II took refuge in an oak tree and curious little Stokesay Castle, (both English Heritage), are also included. Book your place now by returning the slip on the enclosed Booking Form.

