



# The Friends of Osterley Park

*A Supporters Group for the National Trust*

## NEWSLETTER

Issue 7

June 1992

### CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Ian Conacher

Once more I have to open with news of changes on the Committee. Sheila Chapman - whose resignation from the Chairmanship was reported in our last issue - has encountered further family problems which have forced her to resign from the Committee. Her energy and dedication to the interests of the "Friends" will be surely missed and all who know her will, I am sure, join with me in thanking her for all the efforts she has made on our behalf in the past.

Sheila's departure will inevitably lead to an increase in the workload of the remaining members of the Committee, and we shall be actively seeking new members to share in this. We decided soon after our formation that business meetings for reports and elections would not be held. This decision was largely based on the view that volunteers for Committee work would have to be cajoled, persuaded or even "press-ganged" into coming forward!

So, if you as a member of the Friends feel that the Committee could be doing more, or doing things differently, or could benefit from your help, we would be glad to hear from you. Urgently needed is a "Minutes Secretary", and also people with experience in fund raising, public relations, and staging of "events".

Our next major event is the performance by the *Covent Garden Minuet Dancers* in the courtyard of the House on Saturday 8th August (full details on enclosed sheet). We are hoping to stage a Musical event in the Long Gallery next Spring. Before this last, we shall be holding the 1993 series of Winter Lectures in St Mary's Parish Hall, Osterley. The programme is now being prepared and full details will appear in the next Newsletter.

### News from the House

Friends visiting the Park will already have noticed the intensive activity going on around the House. Scaffolding has been erected on the North wall for the decoration of the windows. The steps and paving of the portico and courtyard have been cleaned and repaired - in readiness for the Minuet Dancers!

Inside the House, many more vases have been acquired for flowers, to the point that additional help is needed for the flower arranging team on Wednesday mornings. To keep up the supply of flowers, help is also needed in the walled garden in tending the beds which produce the blooms for the House.



Volunteers are also needed to assist in "litter picking", either for the major clean-up on Monday mornings or at intermediate times - perhaps combined with dog walking?..

Volunteers for any of these tasks should contact Christine Williams at the House on (081) 560 3918.

Finally, tickets are still available for the Band Concert on Saturday July 11th and for the "Lunches with Thomas Gresham" on Monday and Tuesday 24th and 25th August advertised in our last Newsletter. Please contact the House for further details.

Many Friends will already have read in the local press that M.E.P.C. have withdrawn their application for development of the lands adjoining the Park. The threat of unacceptable "changes of use" has therefore been lifted - at least for the present!

**Following on from Profiles of the Friends of Osterley Committee Members, we continue with a profile of Howard Anderson, our Treasurer.**

## **Howard A. Anderson**

Howard was born at Weymouth in 1913. He spent a few very early years in London, until he was evacuated to High Wycombe where he remained until 1930. He was educated at the Royal Grammar School.

Having a deep and lasting interest in engineering of all kinds, it was inevitable that he had an engineering apprenticeship, which culminated in 9 years of aircraft design work covering the war years. Concurrently, as many others did, he had Home Guard duties, which he did as a junior officer.

The war over and his job gone, he started as a partner in an engineering venture which proved to be unfruitful, but gave him the experience of anguish and spending a considerable amount of money.

He finally acquired a firm job as a Director of Rank Precision Industries, controlling the production of 18 factories across the country. This provided him with a wealth of engineering expertise and interest.

Outside the labours of work, Howard has enjoyed for many years a very active sporting life at rugby, golf, squash and tennis. After the wear and tear of these, he is now reduced to play bowls, a game that he finds good but does not raise the adrenalin to dangerous levels! His sporting connections have also led him into an active participation in the management of clubs, in various capacities.

Now fully retired, his interests are centered on gardening, the National Trust, a family of five grandchildren, two daughters and two excellent sons-in-law. He is maintaining some sporting interests by watching the progress of his grandchildren in their wide range of pursuits, as well as their academic achievements.

**Further to the interesting article by Peter Thornton in the last issue of the Newsletter, we received the following letter from John Hardy. The Editor takes this opportunity to confirm that all your letters and contributions are welcomed, and should be addressed to Christina Scherer, 22 Kingsbridge Avenue, London W3 9AJ.**

I much enjoyed your Osterley Newsletter and wish we had started one twenty years ago. Peter Thornton very kindly sent me a copy of his article, but no doubt was unable to make a correction before publication.

The story about the library ceiling was that the Adam ceiling there, as well as the Adam ceiling from the Adelphi in the Victoria & Albert Museum, were both white in the early 1960s. At the time, the experts stated that Adam had produced coloured drawings for his clients that looked pretty, but the clients had decided to have white ceilings! However, when a 'scientific officer' named Miss Darrah arrived in the V & A's Conservation Department and showed an interest in microscopic examination of paintwork, she was asked to check the Adelphi ceiling and revealed that it was coloured underneath the white paint. Also, the five inset small Zucchi paintings had been partly overpainted.

It was the Adelphi ceiling that led to the Osterley ceiling being painted according to the watercolour. At the time, the areas without colouring but with shaded ornament were thought to be black raised plasterwork on a white ground, as had been executed in the Register House, Edinburgh. This was done and naturally looked dreadful. It was then realised that the plasterwork in these areas should be painted white, possibly on a greyish ground, so a layer of white paint was applied, thus creating greyish raised plasterwork on a white ground! Peter Thornton merged the Adelphi and Osterley rooms in his article, so I hope future students will not try to search for lost Zucchis.

The same scientific officer told us that she had found yellow paint on the Breakfast Room ceiling. Many years later, she admitted that she had probably found dirty white rather than yellow!!

**Linda Mills is the Head Gardener at Osterley and writes below, giving us a seasonal look at what is happening in the Park.**

Dear Friends,

Spring has sprung and Summer is almost upon us; as ever, there are lots to do in the Park. The grass is growing faster than we can cut it at the moment and, on top of this, there is a huge amount of restoration work ongoing in the grounds, centered on the pleasure grounds.

The reinstatement of the original paths is well underway and will, hopefully, be complete by the end of the Summer. This will enable us to fork out and dig over the shrubs beds ready for planting in the coming winter. The volunteers, lead by Lesley Orton, are tending the seed beds in the walled garden and all the tulip bulbs planted by them are up, in flower, and in use in floral displays in the House.

Our dog guidelines have been in use now for some months and seem to have been adopted by most people bringing their dogs in the grounds, save of course the hardened few whom our Estate Warden - Maria - does her best to track down!

All the storm damaged trees from the January 1990 "blow" have been cleared away, leaving just a few large lengths of timber which we hope to sell to local Art colleges for their sculpture department. Once this has been achieved, a contractor will be engaged to remove the root plates and we will be able to back fill the holes with fresh top soil to avoid the spread of harmful fungi which can thrive on buried wood, for perhaps twenty years.

As you can see, our main gates are now finished. We still have to re-grade the areas behind the new curved wall and sow new grass seed in the autumn, probably in September.

Hoping you have a good year, as I know we will.

Linda.

**In this issue we are beginning a 'Diary' by a well-known local resident "Wyke Green". I am sure you will enjoy the light hearted approach of a gentle stroll in the park!**

## **A POTTER IN THE PARK ..... WITH " WYKE GREEN"**

I decided not to join the 43 enthusiastic bird watchers who, like the bird themselves, rose early on the beautiful dawn of Sunday 3rd May. Their mission, organised by the Trust with the RSPB, was a 2-hour watch starting at 4.45a.m.

Among the group was Barry Williams, awoken no doubt by the sound of arriving cars on the gravel courtyard outside his bedroom window. Over bacon sandwiches and coffee, served in the Tea Room by an early rising Julie, the 'twitchers' reported a rewarding morning.

Another escorted bird watch, this time starting at a more respectable ten o'clock, has been arranged for Sunday 6th September.

\*\*\*\*\*

On the subject of our feathered friends, life in the heronry, on the East side of the Middle Lake, has been busy lately. Perched somewhat precariously in a nest in the upper branches, I spotted a pair of heron chicks watching father fish for their breakfast.

And the final bird story. The Stork called at Bothy Cottage, the home of Head Gardener Linda Mills and her husband Kevin, in February to deliver a baby girl. The baby will be christened Fern - an appropriate choice by her horticultural parents.

\*\*\*\*\*

Four years after the 7th Earl of Jersey and the Countess took up residence at Osterley, a simple two-up two-down cottage was built in 1887, along Osterley Lane. To commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria's reign, an avenue of trees was planted in 1897, extending from the little cottage toward the House. It was, quite obviously, called Jubilee Avenue, and the cottage renamed Jubilee Lodge.

Until the mid-1970's, Jubilee Cottage had a number of tenants, in the early days staff from the House and the Estate. The last occupant was, I understand, a retired Tax Inspector. For the past 18 years or so the Lodge has remained empty, and sadly attracted vandalism.

Now it is being completely renovated. Electricity is being installed - for the first time - and a bathroom and inside loo! The architects, Sell Wade Postins, have carefully retained the exterior styling, with its slate roof. Generous coats of N.T. Green paint have been applied, and soon it will be home of Estate Warden George Streeter and his wife Maria.

Early in May, I met a visitor to the Park, a spirited 86 year old lady - too shy to give me her name - who, before World War I, lived in Jubilee Lodge. She remembered that, as a little girl, she often opened the gate for the Earl in his carriage to drive through.

Nostalgic memories echo from all directions. One Sunday evening in March, I had a phone call from Co. Down, Northern Ireland. The voice was not that of an Ulsterman, but had an accent definitely from West Middlesex.

"I've just read an article about Osterley in the British Airways Retired Staff Magazine" said 76 year old George Cook, a former airline engineer. "No, I am not offering my services as a Volunteer", explained George, "but my wife and I did our courting in Osterley Park when I lived at Hanwell".

George Cook and his bride moved to Ulster in 1949, and neither have ever been back to Osterley, and wanted to know what it was like today. For the next twenty minutes, I gave him a telephone update.

I wonder if George and his wife would like to become sentimental Friends of Osterley Park?

### **Good start for Batricars**

Fine weather, a full team of volunteers, and a mini-fleet of three battery-powered vehicles on the start line enabled the Friends' "Batricars" project to get under way on Sunday 3rd May.

The project, to enable the less mobile to explore Osterley Park more conveniently, was well received by the thirty-five visitors who used the vehicles during the first month of operation.

Dudley Foy, who has coordinated the introduction with Barry Williams, finally recruited ten volunteer helpers; the majority are British Airways retired staff.

The service was offered every Sunday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoon during the month, plus both holiday Mondays. "We were very lucky with the weather in May", said Dudley. "This is essentially a fine weather facility, but two volunteers will be on hand every planned afternoon at 2 o'clock, unless it is pouring with rain".

The vehicles, two four-wheeled single seaters and a 2-seat electric tricycle, were used on the fourteen days they were made available. Most popular was the two-seat tricycle. Although not so easy for the more severely disabled to manage, their able-bodied companions could handle the controls.

Due to various ground works in the Park, some of the recommended routes were restricted, but the more enterprising users discovered alternative paths. One couple found their way on to the Osterley Lane bridge over the M4 motorway! This is very much out of bounds.

The involvement of the "Friends" in the project began last August when they funded the purchase of the two Batricars. The tricycle was donated by the Enfield N.T.A. in February.

Although the vehicles are loaned free of charge to the less mobile visitors, many of the users so far kindly offered a voluntary donation toward the upkeep of the vehicles.

The service is planned to continue until the end of September.

# The Friends of Osterley Park

## Stair Climber Appeal

The "Batricar" operation at Osterley has been a great success in its first month. We have had 36 customers on the 15 days we have been operating and utilisation of the service is growing, as more potential users get to know about it.

One major obstacle remains - we can give mobility around the Park, the Trust have wheelchairs available on loan inside the House, but the flight of steps up to the portico and main floor level is at present an insurmountable barrier to the wheelchair-bound.

Various options for internal and external lifts have been considered by the Trust, in pursuance of this policy of providing access to properties for the disabled. Unfortunately, no acceptable solution involving fixed equipment can be found which would not cause damage to the structure and appearance of an historic building.

An elegant solution to the problem was demonstrated at the House at a recent conference on "mobility", attended by your Chairman. This is the "Scala Mobil" battery-driven stair-climbing machine, which can be attached to a visitor's own wheelchair. An attendant can then drive the assembly up the stairs by means of an ingenious arrangement of wheels on rotating arms.

The cost of such a machine is approximately £4,000. This figure is beyond the capacity of the Friends to provide from normal income, at our present level of membership.

The "Friends" Committee have therefore decided to organise a separate appeal for funds to enable the National Trust to purchase such a machine for Osterley.

This appeal will be launched publicly within the next few weeks. A separate account for Appeal Funds will be opened very shortly, and any "Friends" wishing to make a donation can send their cheques, made out to "Friends of Osterley - Stair Climber Appeal" to the Chairman, 45 Wood Lane, Isleworth, Mdx, TW7 5EF.