

# The Friends of Osterley Park

*A Supporters Group for the National Trust*

## NEWSLETTER

Issue 8

Autumn 1992

### CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Ian Conacher

The weather forecast for Saturday 8th August gave a 20% chance of thunderstorms. After consultation with the "Oracle" and with "Ceefax", the decision was taken to go ahead with the performance of the Covent Garden Minuet Dancers in the courtyard of the House.

The correctness of the decision was confirmed as an audience of over 100 Friends and guests witnessed a display of elegant dancing, in splendid eighteenth-century dress, by a group who were obviously enjoying themselves and communicating that enjoyment to all present. When the time came in the second half of the programme for "audience participation", there was no shortage of volunteers.

Our thanks are due to Thekla McCracken and her Company for giving us the chance to enjoy this demonstration of their art. Hopefully we shall see them again in the future. Our thanks are due also to the staff at the House for the work put into preparing for the show and to the "Tudor Stable Tea Room" for providing the buffet, and to Dudley Foy, our Sound Engineer.

My personal euphoria at the successful outcome was heightened by two things: firstly the sound of the thunderstorm which broke out after we were all safely home, and secondly the realisation that we had made a useful profit which will go towards our "Stair Climber Appeal".

Members of the National Trust will by now have received the Autumn Magazine, and also the Thames and Chilterns Region Newsletter. Osterley achieves four mentions in this: for the Education work run by Christine Williams, the visit of the Young National Trust Theatre, the work in the Pleasure Grounds and in the walled garden - with a photograph of Lesley Orton selecting flowers for the House - and finally a mention of the "Friends" Stair Climber Appeal. Lesley's husband Lewis is confined to a wheelchair by M.S. but retains a lively interest in Osterley Park and the "Friends", so that we have been able to use him as a 'guinea pig' for demonstrations to the Press of our Batricars and, more recently, for the launch of the Stair Climber Appeal. Hopefully we shall be able to get him into the House next year!

Donations for the Appeal are beginning to roll in, but we have still a long way to go to reach our target of £4,000. From my own experience as a Batricar Steward, I can see that there are many other visitors to the Park for whom the steps of the House are an insuperable obstacle and who could make use of the Stair Climber when it becomes available.

Please send your cheque NOW - payable to "Friends of Osterley Stair Climber Appeal" to me at 45, Wood Lane, Isleworth, Middlesex, TW7 5EF.







## NEWS FROM THE HOUSE

by Barry Williams, Administrator

Following their most successful product launch at Osterley in May, Yamaha have generously donated two golf carts. Contrary to recent newspapers reports, one is being used by Maria Streeter, the dog warden. The other will be used in 1993 to ferry our less mobile visitors from the main car park to the House and Tearoom in peak periods when their special parking bays near the House are full.

The trench that has been dug along Jubilee Lane is for the installation of a mains electricity cable and telephone line. An interesting aspect of this job is that Southern Electricity's trench inspector declared the excavated soil unsuitable for bedding in their cable and we had to invest in 80 tonnes of sand to line the trench.

Our long-awaited Estate Noticeboard is expected shortly and will be erected adjacent to the site of the former recruiting hut - what we now call "the octagon" at the edge of the Garden Lake. It will be sited so that it will be easily seen by visitors from both the carpark and the drive. It will give us additional space and be a considerable improvement on the present temporary arrangements whereby notices are fixed to the walls of the octagon. The octagon itself will be resited closer to the barrier and offer drier, more comfortable quarters for the car park attendants. The old sentry box will be given a decent burial.

While work on relaying and cleaning the front steps and courtyard is now finished, you will have noticed that the front of the House remains closed. This is because workmen are now carrying out joinery repairs and repainting the window frames, as well as repointing the brickwork where necessary. We expect this work to continue until after the House closes on 31st October. Meanwhile, entry for the visiting public is via the West steps and the front desk is temporarily located in the Long Gallery.

Winter activities: a series of short guided walks is planned for Sundays in January, February and March. These will include a general estate walk and a guided tour around the exterior of the stables, walled garden and pleasure grounds. Details will be posted on the notice board.

Volunteers: we estimate that we need to recruit another 15 room stewards for 1993. This job entails a fortnightly commitment of 3-4 hours, during house opening times. Training will be given on Saturday 13th March, and the pre-season meeting has been set for Saturday 20th March, 9.30 - 1pm.

We are also seeking further volunteers to help in the walled garden, growing flowers to use in the displays in the House.

Another job for which we hope to find volunteers is leaflet distribution. We need people to distribute our property leaflet to local Tourist Information Centres (Hounslow, Richmond, Twickenham, Heathrow, Hammersmith), local libraries, hotels. This will be from late November onwards. For all these volunteer tasks please contact Christine Williams on 081 560 3918 during normal office hours.

## PROFILE OF OLIVE MARKE

Olive, a Bristolian, has lived in London for the past twenty-eight years, twenty-two of those in Ealing. She is married with two grown up children, both of whom have taken an active part in the National Trust.

Olive works full time in the nursery of a school for autistic and communication disordered children; she is also a governor of the school. As a committed member of the church of St Benedict at Ealing Abbey, she has helped to run the youth group and now helps fund raise for various groups within the parish, including the choir and the elderly.

Olive's dismay at seeing so many of our national treasures sold abroad, due to lack of funds and her husband's "then do something about it" persuaded her to become an active member of the local N.T. Association. She has been a member of the N.T. for approximately 9 years, on the Committee of the Ealing N.T. Association since 1988 - originally as Leader of a team of recruiters based at Osterley Park House - and was involved in the inauguration of the combined teams of E.N.T.A. and Friends of Osterley Park, and then chair, the Ealing National Trust Association since June 1990.

E.N.T.A. has had, and continues to have, a long and fruitful relationship with Osterley Park House (its members have raised approximately £27,000 for the House) and looks forward to developing this friendship in the years to come.



## BATTERY-POWERED VEHICLES POPULAR AT OSTERLEY

One hundred and thirty less-mobile visitors to the Park have taken advantage of the service since it started in May this year, up to the end of August.

A team of twelve volunteers, working in pairs, have provided the facility - free of charge - on a total of sixty-two days, from the Stable Block. Sunday afternoons have been the most popular, with no fewer than sixty-eight 'hirings'. On six occasions, operations have been curtailed by wet weather, in August particularly. Although the facility has been offered on three Bank Holidays, these days attract only a few less-mobile visitors.

Over half of the hirings have been with the twin-seat Tricycle, much favoured by the elderly, as it enables a companion to drive. The younger people, many of whom drive a vehicle on a regular basis, prefer the single seat four-wheel cars.

Much of the credit for creating an awareness of the service is due to the volunteer team on duty. When they see a car bearing the familiar 'orange badge' parking, they invite the less mobile passengers to have a short trial run. Many do, then feel confident to drive off and tour the Park for an hour. There are now half a dozen regular weekly visitors.

The facility will continue to be available until Sunday 18th October, and will restart on 31st March next year.



## WINTER LECTURES 1993

After our succesful series of talks last year, the Committee have decided to arrange more Winter Lectures early in 1993.

On January 27th, Ted Fawcett will be speaking on "The Garden Archaeology of Osterley". Ted has been much involved in recent months with researches into the original layout of the Pleasure Gardens and has applied his ability as a "dowser" to assist in locating the original paths.

On February 10th, Angus Wainwright, our Regional Archaeologist, will be talking about his work at Osterley and at other properties in the Thames and Chilterns Region.

On February 24th, we have a return visit from our local historian Andrea Cameron who will talk on "Brentford and surrounding districts during the Civil War".

Finally, on March 10th, Mrs Jean Martin will speak about the early design and manufacture of tapestries in Flanders and France, and the establishment of the Gobelins factory in Paris, at which the Osterley tapestries were made.

All talks will be illustrated by slides and will be held in St Mary's Parish Hall, next to the church in Osterley Road, and will begin at 8pm. Coffee and biscuits will be served after the talk.

Admission to individual lectures will be £2.50, or £8.00 for the series. An application form for tickets will be sent in December with our next Newsletter.



## "CAROLS AT SUNSET"

We have been offered the pleasure of a visit from the Hanwell Festival Choir to lead in the singing of Christmas Carols in the courtyard of the Stable Block at Osterley from 3.30pm to 4.30pm on Saturday 19th December.

No charge will be made for admission, but a collection will be taken in aid of the Friends' work for the Trust.

We are hoping to arrange for coffee and mince pies to be available - further details in our next issue - but please put the date in your diaries now!





# A potter in the Park



Sitting on the bankside of Middle Lake, fishing rod in hand, I met Michael. He had been there since crack of dawn, well muffled against the morning chill but happy watching his float, waiting to catch the 'big one'. So far that morning he was out of luck; there was nothing in his keep-net.

Michael is one of 250 anglers who applied for an annual permit to fish in Osterley this season, which started in mid June. To obtain a permit, the angler must apply to Linda Mills, the Head Gardener, and provide a couple of passport size photos too. It costs £15.

The Middle Lake is stocked naturally with carp, tench, bream, pike and a few terrapins. Unfortunately, the lack of rainfall has reduced the water level by about a foot this year, and fewer anglers are found around the bank. Most congregate alongside the gravel path of Osterley Lane and in the attractive woods and grassy banks flanking the North side.

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If you venture into the walled garden at about nine o'clock any Wednesday morning, you are likely to meet the "Flower Ladies" - the rarely seen team who, each week, produce the lovely floral decorations that enhance the House.

Recently I met Joyce, Ella and Rita collecting Bear's Breeches, Baby's Breath, Cosmos and Love-Lies-Bleeding, just a few of the more unusual names of flowers grown in the Garden by Lesley Orton and her team of green fingers especially for the volunteer flower arrangers. The greenery is gathered from around the Park.

I followed the ladies into the House where Margaret, Owen, Dominique and a pair of Jeans had already gathered some of the more traditional varieties in season and were planning the arrangements for the twenty one vases, baskets and bricks that are used each week.

There are no less than seven displays prepared for the Long Gallery alone; two baskets to place under the table, and one in the fireplace in the Breakfast Room. In the Eating Room, two baskets are arranged to go onto the mantelpiece. Displays are placed in all but three of the rooms open to visitors. There is even a small vase placed on the wooden loo seat of the Victorian closet in the tower room off the Long Gallery!

The Childs family loved flowers; Mr Childs chose the marigold as the emblem for his bank. Fresh marigolds are used extensively when in season. The huge, cream-coloured lemon scented flowers of the magnolia grandiflora, grown along the west side of the House, appear in July but last barely a couple of days when picked.

It takes the flower ladies over twenty four hours work every Wednesday morning to collect and create the arrangements. On Saturday, two or three of them come back to the House to remove the dead flowers and freshen up the displays for the pleasure of the week-end visitors.

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During a walk in the Pleasure Gardens in mid-Summer, I was startled to see a mechanical excavator clawing its way through the green turf, in front of the Robert Adam Garden House. A splendid tree had also disappeared. A series of semi-circular swathes were cut, then filled with hoggen - a sand and gravel mixture popular in the eighteenth century for creating country paths.

The restoration of the Pleasure Gardens to its former design is part of the 1979 National Trust Management Plan for Osterley. The style, known as 'Gardenesque' was created by John Claudius Loudon and was in vogue between 1820 and 1860.

Eventually, I am told, the shrub and flower beds will be re-planted. In the meantime, a convenient seat has been built around the trunk of one large tree. Next Summer, I expect to see elegant ladies, dressed in crinolines, sitting there.

