



The Friends of Osterley Park



A Supporters Group for the National Trust

NEWSLETTER

Issue 9

Winter 1992

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Ian Conacher

As autumn turns into winter, the "Friends" can look back on a season of solid achievement. We have been able to assist the Trust in many ways, notably by assuming the responsibility for the "Batricars" operation, arranging a rota of volunteers and carrying out minor maintenance to keep the vehicles in service.

The "Stair Climber" Appeal launched in the Summer is going well; further details are given separately in the Newsletter.

Socially, our "Opening Party" in March and the performance of the Covent Garden Minuet Dancers were enjoyed by a large number of members and guests. We shall finish this year with an open air concert - "Carols at Sunset" with the Hanwell Festival Choir at 3.30pm on Saturday 19th December in the Stable Block courtyard, during which a collection will be taken for the Stair Climber Appeal.

Early in the New Year, we are planning a series of "Winter Lectures"; full details of these are enclosed in this issue.

Our achievements in 1992 could not have been possible without the loyal and enthusiastic support of a hard-working Committee whose members have responded to all the challenges that have been thrown at them. Financially, the year has been a success and we start 1993 with an adequate balance to carry us through to the start of the new season, when subscriptions will hopefully swell the coffers once more.

Our informal constitution does not call for General Meetings and elections for officers. If, however, any members have any questions on the accounts or suggestions for future activities, they are welcome to contact me.

Best Wishes to you all for Christmas and for a Happy and Prosperous New Year.



BARBARA PHILLIPS - A PROFILE

I was born, in peace-time Europe, in July 1945 in Preston, Lancs and moved to Birmingham in November 1946, where we lived in the picturesque Quaker village of Boumville, until I left to be married on leaving college.

I taught in Lavender Hill in the days of ILEA, before moving to the downlands market town of Wantage on a very wet and misty day in November 1967. We lived on the Atomic Energy Research Establishment housing site for 3 years, then followed a year in sunny California where my husband was a Visiting Professor of Materials Science at UCLA. We lived in Los Angeles. We returned home to move into a house not far from our present home a few weeks before the birth of our second child.

Voluntary work of one kind or another has intermingled with the raising of three children, until more recent times when youth club work and teaching has also featured. Within those voluntary activities I have helped with playgroups, inevitably flower arranging, two of the joys of which were to help with displays to celebrate the 900 years of activity seen at Westminster Abbey, whilst I chaired the local group, and arranging flowers throughout scientific buildings to be opened by the Queen Mother.

Rather more significantly, I have also worked in my local special needs school on both a voluntary and paid basis. My work with volunteers included a regular commitment to my local Oxfam shop, where all the latest ideas for charity retailing were thrown at us and, as Shop Leader, I was amazed to learn we were earning the highest income per sq. ft. in the country; with 828 other shops to choose from, our group of volunteers felt very heartened.

The move to a staff appointment at the Oxfam Area Office was made to assist with fund-raising and then to administering the Area with 34 shops and over 1,000 volunteers. This was followed by a year's very exciting work, directly managing seven high-earning shops along the M4 corridor. My free time has often been given over to fund-raising or campaigning activities.

In February '91, I moved to an appointment with the National Trust at Hughenden as Regional Volunteer Coordinator, responsible for the recruitment and well-being of volunteers at all properties in the Thames & Chilterns Region. My responsibilities now also include coordinating the provision of facilities for disabled visitors.

My leisure activities have included painting on porcelain or in oils. Musical interests have always played a large part in my life, from piano lessons through choral and musical operettas to flute lessons in the past few years. My Church commitments (born a Baptist, now a Methodist) have also kept me busy and I am currently undertaking a 3-4 years study and practical course run by the "Division of Ministries" to become a lay-preacher.

A FEW STEPS MORE FOR THE "FRIENDS"

The appeal for funds to purchase a "Stair Climber" machine to lift a visitor in a wheelchair up the steps at the main entrance to the House is going well. Cash already in hand or firmly pledged amounts to £2,450 - sufficient to climb 12 ½ of the 20 steps!

Hounslow Council's Disabled Access Fund have pledged that at the end of the Appeal they will make up any deficit up to a maximum of £1,000, the equivalent of 5 steps! But we still need at least another £550 to reach our target of £4,000.

So confident of our ability to achieve this are the Trust's staff at the Regional Office at Hughenden that they have placed the order for the machine, which will be delivered in the New Year and should be operational from the time the House reopens in April. I hope that we can show that this confidence is not misplaced, and that the cheque for the cost of the machine can be handed over to the Trust before it goes into service.

Donations - large or small - should be sent to:-
Ian Conacher, Chairman Friends of Osterley Park 45, Wood Lane Isleworth Middlesex TW7 5EF
Cheques should be made payable to "Friends of Osterley Stairclimber Appeal".

Thank you in advance for your generosity.

GOOD BARGAIN

If you are interested in the old maps of the area, a good buy for £1.75 is the recently published "Godfrey Edition" of the Ordnance Survey map of 1894 of Osterley Park, which can be obtained from the Osterley Book Shop, in Thornbury Road. It has a large, very detailed and unusual scale of about 15 inches to the mile. It covers from Wyke Green in the east to the wheatlands of Heston to the west, and southward beyond St Mary's Church.

It reveals much of the layout as it was 100 years ago and, in the park, suprisingly, little has changed. The boundary of the estate, the lakes and tree-line avenues are all clearly marked, and anyone familiar with the park will recognise many landmarks of yester year.

Traces of a narrow causeway - about four feet wide - across the middle lake can still be seen, usually covered by the Canada geese! Walk along the newly laid lakeside path and you can see the rotten stakes of the old boat house. Both are clearly marked on the old map.

An early 'bench mark' (a survey point where height is measured) is still identifiable, etched into the brick work a few yards to the right of the faded green gate that gives access to the walled garden for the estate vehicles, and the gap (now closed off) into the Pleasure Gardens. The measured height there was - and might still be - 86.5 feet above mean sea level at Liverpool.

Did you know that the parish boundary line crosses the lawn in front of the House, which is in the parish of Heston, while the pagoda in the lake is in Spring Grove? On the reverse of the map is an interesting potted history of the area 100 years ago and a list of the residents, listed as "private" or "commercial". Among those listed is: Jersey, Earl of, P.C. G.C.M.G. (Governor of New South Wales), Osterley House.

A CRAFTSMAN - AND AN INDUSTRIALIST"

The name of Matthew Boulton is known to visitors to Osterley House as the craftsman responsible for the lanterns on the main staircase and for the "door furniture" i.e. locks, handles and cast brass decorative escutcheons.

Many are perhaps unaware of his other claim to fame as the partner of James Watt in the production and sale of steam engines, incorporating Watt's invention of the separate condenser. These new engines working at high pressures called for much higher standards of accuracy and quality in the casting of the cylinders, and these standards were readily achievable in Boulton's Soho foundry in Birmingham. "Boulton and Watt" engines, with their greater efficiency, displaced the earlier "atmospheric" pumping engines and enabled mineral resources to be tapped, which were beyond the reach of the earlier technology. The combination of Watt, an academic inventor, with Boulton, an extrovert "production engineer" and a shrewd businessman, lead to the growth of an extremely successful company.

FIRE COMPARTMENTING HAS PRIORITY!

The major work to be done at the House this winter is the improvement of fire safety by the construction of compartment walls accross void spaces in the roof and above suspended ceilings. This is part of a programme which the Trust has put in hand nationally, following the disastrous fires at Hampton Court and Uppark House in Sussex. Altogether, 260 properties are programmed for attention accross the country.

The need for this work was most forcefully demonstrated last month when fire swept through similar voids at Windsor Castle, so that what might have been a small and containable fire became a major conflagration. Other work to be done in the House includes restoration of the lanterns on the Great Staircase.

"AN ONGOING SAGA?"

A recent issue of "Saga" magazine featured Osterley Park in an article entitled "Old Treasures, New Glories", in which the author speaks of the work of Ted Fawcett and his "forked stick" divining the layout of the original Pleasure Grounds.

Also featured is the work of Simon Rumsey in cleaning the drawing room fender which is made of "paktong", an alloy of copper, nickel and zinc. This, and the matching fire irons, now gleam with a soft glow. The fire irons were discovered with many polished steel items which have also been restored. Included among these are some shovels, the blade of which has been pierced with decorative motifs such as the "anthemion" beloved by Robert Adam. This makes them seemingly useless as shovels - unless they are for roasting chestnuts?

A potter in the Park



WITH 'WYKE' GREEN

On a pleasant Sunday afternoon in mid-October, I took my dog for a stroll in the Park, and caught sight of Tanya and Don - on duty in the stable courtyard - looking after the Batricar service for the less-mobile visitors.

This was the last day, this season, that the facility would be available. Tanya and Don are among the dozen volunteers who have given their services since it started in May. Both are retired, and both had worked for British Airways (Tanya in Reservations, Don as a licensed aircraft engineer). Five other volunteers helping with the Batricars were also retired airline employees. Two of the battery-powered vehicles were 'on hire' when we met. The popular twin-seat tricycle and one of the single-seat self-drive four-wheel machines. A gentleman from Richmond drove the tricycle into the stable block with a look of satisfaction. "When are you starting up next year?" he enquired. Fifteen minutes later, the single seater returned. "This is the second time I've used this car at Osterley" he told me. As the shades of dusk settled over the Park, Don totalled up the log sheet for October. With pride, he told me that during the season, no fewer than 179 'hirings' had been recorded.

Over a cup of tea, the duo recounted some of the amusing anecdotes that occurred during their first season as volunteers at Osterley, not just from the less-mobile users of the service, but from the scores of interested bystanders who stopped for a chat. "We heard long sad stories from World War II veterans, problems about pensions and the D.S.S., the lady of generous proportions who got stuck in a single seater."

With the Tea Room being a focal point for Park visitors, many stopped and merely sought information. The most common question was "Where are the loos?", followed by "Where is the National Trust Shop?" Giving directions to Syon Park became common place!

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CAROLS AT SUNSET

The Hanwell Festival Choir was formed by its conductor Dr Bowles Bevan to lead the singing at the first Hanwell Festival held at Whitsun 1970.

The Choir gave its first solo performance in 1971 and has since performed regularly, giving a minimum of three concerts each year, plus many concerts for local charities. The works performed are wide, ranging from the Verdi Requiem through to John Rutter's Requiem.

The Choir hopes to become better known in a wider area. For the last 2 years, it sang carols in Kew Gardens.

The Choir will be singing Carols in the courtyard of the Stable Block at Osterley House on Saturday 19th December between 3.30pm and 4.30pm. The audience will have opportunities to join in the singing, and there will be mulled wine (orange juice for children and the cautious car drivers) and biscuits for sale in aid of the Climber Appeal. What a nice way to end up a visit to the Park. Please come and join us for this festive event.

Merry Christmas and Best Wishes for 1993