

# The Friends of Osterley Park



## NEWSLETTER

Issue 135 Winter 2024 £1 (free to members)



Francis Child by Michael Dahl

Dear Friends

We are now well into Autumn with the shorter days – the Osterley gardens and park are showing their autumn colours per Hannah's piece on page 3.

I'm delighted to advise that following our advertisement in the charity website REACH we have found a new Treasurer; Sophie O'Donnell lives locally and is a long-standing National Trust member. A big thank you to Susan who has been holding the reins for the past eight months. However, we still do not have a Newsletter Editor; this is now crucial as Susan is not able to continue doing this ad infinitum having travel plans that coincide with publication dates. How dare she!

We've enjoyed some excellent London visits and coach trips this spring/summer. Many thanks to the two Margarets, Vik and Yvonne who, between them, have planned the trips and taken the bookings. Planning has started for 2025. If there is somewhere you'd particularly like to visit, please notify Margaret Friday (London) or Margaret Lydamore (coach visits) - details on rear cover. Generally speaking, we wouldn't visit anywhere we've been in the past 10 years. Nor would we organise a coach trip to a small property with space for only a few guests at a time as coach costs are just not viable.

We've also had some well attended coffee mornings with one more to come on 28 November. The 2025 dates are listed on page 11. John would welcome suggestions for future talks.

The Committee has been discussing a replacement for the inoperable large buggy that carries Friends, visitors and volunteers from the car park to the stable courtyard and is integral to Osterley's smooth operation. We understand that a buggy has been sourced from another Trust property which should arrive at Osterley before the year end as an interim measure before a new buggy can be ordered.

I'm looking forward to seeing many of you at our Christmas lunch at the Grasshoppers Club on Thursday, 12 December - we still have space so don't delay in booking - details on page 9.

Howard

The move from summer to winter brings plenty of change at Osterley. The trees change from green to gold to bare, the days get shorter, the buildings get darker and our visitor experience shifts to accommodate. There's still plenty to experience, and lots of ways to bring some brightness to the darker days.

This winter will see a return to opening some of the Principal Floor of the house over winter, with the Ford exhibition staying open for visitors throughout the winter months. This exhibition of artwork collected by Sir Brinsley Ford and donated to the National Trust features works themed around the Grand Tour, and has attracted many visitors to the House since it went on display earlier this year. Between May and October, 65% of visitors who got tickets at the Kiosk visited the House, which is particularly impressive considering that the State Apartments (the usual stars of the show) have been displayed under protection as part of the South Wing Project. That project is also going well, and lots of essential conservation work has been completed.

For Christmas we'll have the return of our ever-popular wreath workshops, led by the Gardening and Programming teams. We guide attendees through making their own wreath with foliage cut from our gardens. It's one of my favourite things to do in the year, as it's always great to see people who came in saying they weren't going to be good at making a wreath leaving with a massive smile on their face, proud of their work. I always say I've seen hundreds of these wreaths made and never seen a bad one, and everyone always has fun. The workshops book up quickly so do visit our website to book if you'd like to have a go.

There has been some staff movement at Osterley. With Jenny Hearn moving on to be Assistant Buildings Surveyor for London, Rowan Thorp has stepped into the role of Facilities Manager. While she recruits for a new Business Services Coordinator, she's being supported by Brenton Wallis and Omer Ajaj from the Visitor Welcome team. We have new team members in the shop and visitor welcome teams, with Helen Baird and Kate Girdlestone joining each team respectively. Denis Ahern will continue as Welcome Manager for the House as his contract has been extended to cover the winter.

Autumn is my favourite season, and not just because I can finally pull out the cosy jumpers. It's a season of change, of paring back and seeing the bones of things. It's surprising moments of colour that don't last long, and so you enjoy them all the more. It's appreciating what you have and thinking about how you can share that with others. It's a chance to evaluate, to prioritise and look to the future. We hope to welcome you to Osterley for some of those moments over the coming months, until the year turns again and spring is once more on our doorstep.

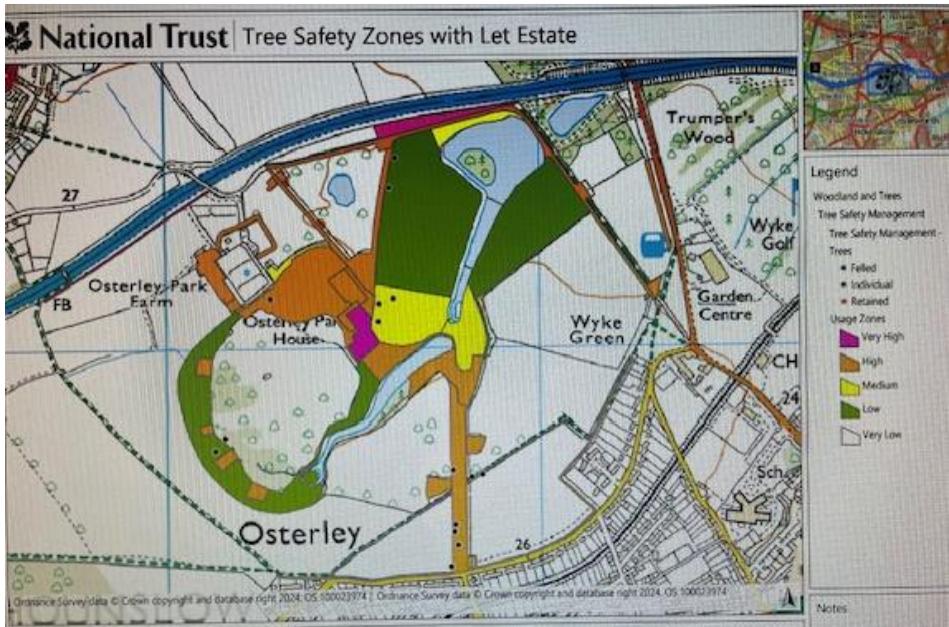
## Rangers at Osterley

Susan Parsons

Nicola Carr, Lead Ranger at Osterley, gave an interesting presentation to the Friends in September about her first year in the job. Since few Friends were present, here are a few facts:

- The Garden Lake has 17,000 cubic metres of water
- Middle Lake has 77,500 cubic metres
- There is a third Osterley lake on what is now the Sultan of Brunei's land. This feeds into the stream that goes through Long Wood and then into the River Brent.

Nicola showed us a very interesting map (reproduced below) showing the degree of tree safety across the property, thus the ongoing attention given to the trees. You'll see that the purple area corresponds to the area around the house



and stable courtyard which is very heavily used by visitors; the orange area includes the formal gardens and roads into the park.

The rangers have a constant battle with brambles across the park, the intention being reduction not elimination as they are important to wildlife.

Nicola mentioned a new volunteering team to Osterley – the **Heritage and Archaeology Ranger Team (HART)**. The National Trust looks after over 100,000 recorded heritage assets of archaeological interest – from Bronze Age burial mounds and Medieval monastic ruins to Iron Age hill forts and Second World War pillboxes. To effectively manage these sites – directing and prioritising conservation work, monitoring the impacts of environmental change, planning for land use change – we need to understand the condition of our archaeological features and monuments and the factors that are impacting them. The principal objective of the HART team is to visit and record the condition of each feature and monument of archaeological interest on our property at least every five years (more often where issues are identified), entering data directly into the archaeology database. Regional Archaeologists are providing guidance and support. A very recent find at Osterley was the boundary stone located on the front lawn which is shown on the old parish boundary records; you might recall Peter Bush asking at the coffee morning whether they had found it – now they have!

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## The Child Family and Michael Dahl

Margaret Friday

As part of the Grand Tour celebration at Osterley, I am featuring Michael Dahl, the artist who painted Robert Child (1674-1721) in Rome gesturing towards the Coliseum in 1712 (now sadly lost). Robert had been in Italy in 1707 so not his first visit but a very distinctive portrait. Dahl also painted Francis and Samuel, Robert's younger brothers. All moved to Osterley and lived in the house where we can see their portraits.

Robert Child and Michael Dahl were members of the Society of Virtuosi of St Luke, patron saint of painters. The Society was set up in London in 1689 as the first club for artists and connoisseurs, and lasted until 1743. Members included artists, sculptors and wealthy collectors like Robert Child. They were a dining club, meeting once a month in a pub for dinner at which works of art were displayed.



Gawen Hamilton painted "Conversation of the Virtuosi of St Luke in the Kings Arms" in the city in 1735. In the portrait, now in the National Portrait Gallery, Michael Dahl can be clearly seen (in brown, third from the left, holding a landscape drawing) along with John Michael Rysbrack, George Vertue and William Kent.

On St Luke's Day (18 October) a banquet was held in celebration. We know that collectors in the society bought and sold works of art and sculpture amongst themselves. Robert Child was known for opening his collection in the Lincoln's Inn mansion, including the Rubens' Duke of Buckingham portraits acquired by his father, Francis Child, to the public - an unusual act in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Michael Dahl was born in Stockholm in 1659. His mother assisted his studies with the top Swedish artists, but he travelled to Europe to expand his knowledge first coming to London in 1682 and working with Sir Godfrey Kneller before proceeding to Paris with Henry Tilson, student of Sir Peter Lely. In 1683 they worked in Paris before travelling to Venice and Rome. In Rome they met retired Queen Christina of Sweden; she left the Swedish throne to move to Rome and convert to Catholicism. She promoted any Swedish artist who did the same. Dahl painted several portraits of Queen Christina and received a gold medal from the Pope. In 1687 Dahl and Tilson left Rome to travel back to England via Stuttgart where Dahl painted several important Swedes who resided there. In 1689 Dahl is back in London portraying the Swedish ambassador. He purchased a house in Leicester Fields, now Square. His importance had increased, and he was engaged to paint the Duke of Somerset, known to be a cantankerous fellow, but Dahl got on with him, painting a number of Somerset family portraits.

After Anne became Queen she commissioned, in 1705, several portraits of herself and her husband, Prince George of Denmark. These still grace the Royal Collection. In that year Michael took an English bride. It was after this

time that Michael Dahl began to paint the Child family including Robert Child in 1712 in Rome. Later he painted his brother Francis and finally Samuel who inherited and moved to Osterley with his family in 1740. There was a family portrait of Samuel, his wife Agatha and their sons Francis and Robert but it is now lost like the Coliseum picture, probably in the 1949 fire in the furniture store in Jersey.

When Godfrey Kneller died in 1723, George I needed a new court painter, so he asked Dahl to paint the Duke of Cumberland who was just two at the time. Dahl felt insulted by the request saying he was happy to paint the King but not a small child. The King was furious, so Dahl did not become court painter and was never knighted although he continued to portray important British figures. He died in 1743 and is buried in St James' Piccadilly.

Do enjoy his depictions of Francis (on the front cover) and Samuel Child, both in the South Corridor at Osterley.



Samuel Child



## Twenty years on – from the December 2004 newsletter Susan Parsons

Comings and going at Osterley - the newsletter records that Linda Mills (Head Gardener) and her husband Kevin (Assistant Gardener) had the mammoth task of extricating themselves and their menagerie (horses, dogs, cats, pigs, goats, chickens, ducks, geese.....not forgetting the peacocks!) from Bothy Cottage and the Stable Block and relocating to their new home in Northamptonshire. December also saw the departure of Barry Williams departing Osterley after 14 years as Property Manager. During his time at Osterley the park had been opened up with many of the hedges taken out to provide vistas of the lawns, lakes and trees. The drive had been relocated from directly in front of the house to its current position alongside the lake. The newsletter also records George Streeter moving from gardening to become a warden; George is still at Osterley 20 years later!

Ian Conacher was Chairman (since 1991). John and Patricia James had just joined the Committee, respectively as Membership Secretary and Minutes Secretary. John Stacey took lots of photographs including the large heavy kitchen table and one of the horse racing trophies won by the Earl of Jersey displayed in the strong room. There was an article on Sir Joseph Banks, Osterley resident in Spring Grove. It's not noted who wrote it - Margaret Friday maybe?

The newsletter reflects on the events of 2004 which included several City of London walks with Doris Sherwood and coach tours led by the indefatigable Jim Tickle. A highlight of the year, adding significantly to the Friends' coffers, was the Osterley Day, an annual event in the stable courtyard with stalls selling bric-à-brac, second hand books, tombola etc.

Looking forward to 2005, the four Winter lectures were announced to be held at St Mary's Parish Hall; one of the speakers was John James on the history of the Olympic Games (he was chair of the British Olympic Association during the 2004 Games). The evening lecture cost was £4 including coffee, tea and biscuits. The annual holiday was to be Lancashire, visiting many of the places we went to in 2022. The subscriptions were due to be increased from £6 to £10, noted as the first increase in 14 years.



Our 100 Club is becoming an endangered species. Numbers are dwindling and are in need of a boost! For the grand sum of just £12 per share per annum you have a chance of winning one of our prizes three times a year – there is always a £100 prize! For the price of a coffee and a pastry twice a year you could be helping to save our

national heritage. Half of the £12 share is used by the Friends to fund projects which benefit Osterley; the remaining £6 goes to the prize fund.

To buy (additional) shares, please contact Susan Parsons at [FriendsoP.sp@gmail.com](mailto:FriendsoP.sp@gmail.com)

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## Save the Dates – Coach trips/London visits in 2025

### Coach trips

Thursday, 8 May – Standen (NT)

Wednesday, 4 June – Mottisfont (NT)

### London visits

Tallow Chandlers' Hall in April TBC

Royal Mews in May TBC

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## Christmas Lunch

**John Collis**

The Friends' Christmas lunch is being held at the Grasshoppers Club in Syon Lane on **Thursday, 12 December** at 12.30. There is plenty of car parking but no convenient public transport. We will try to match up those with space to give a lift in their car with those who need a lift.

3 courses – starter, main and dessert – at £31 - must be pre-ordered by booking form (*attached*) to John Collis.

Late applications: please phone 07778 401804 or email [collis329@hotmail.com](mailto:collis329@hotmail.com)

## Menu

Starter:

Roast butternut squash soup (V)

Duck & orange pate

Prawn cocktail

Main course:

Roast turkey with traditional trimmings

Roast beef & Yorkshire pudding

Baked salmon fillet & leek sauce

Chestnut & seed roast (V)

Desserts:

Christmas pudding (V)

Baked vanilla cheesecake and raspberry compote (V)

Cheeseboard (V)

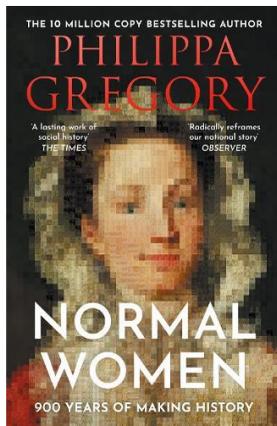
Mince Pie & Coffee

There will be a complementary glass of mulled wine.

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## Osterley Book Group

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 10 December at 2pm



An alternative account of Britain's past through the eyes of various female figures

**New members welcome**  
**Please contact Wendy Sim for details:**  
**[Wendyannsim@hotmail.com](mailto:Wendyannsim@hotmail.com)**

**10.30 for 11.00 in the Study Base at Osterley Park.  
Friends £4, Others £5**

The coffee mornings for 2025 are as follows:

- **Wednesday, 29 January – Howard Simmons**
- **Thursday, 6 March**
- **Wednesday, 30 April + AGM**
- **Thursday, 29 May**
- **Tuesday, 24 June**
- **Wednesday, 30 July**
- **Thursday, 28 August**
- **Tuesday, 30 September**
- **Wednesday, 29 October**
- **Thursday, 27 November**

<p><b>Chairman</b>  <b>Howard Simmons</b>  <u>howard.simmons50@icloud.com</u></p>	<p><b>Hon Secretary, 100 Club</b>  <b>Acting Newsletter Editor</b>  <b>Susan Parsons</b>  <u>FriendsoOP.sp@gmail.com</u></p>
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<p><b>London Visits</b>  <b>Margaret Friday</b>  07930 697748  <u>margaretfriday145@gmail.com</u></p>	<p><b>Coffee Mornings</b>  <b>John Collis</b>  <u>collis329@hotmail.com</u></p>
<p><b>Coach Bookings</b>  <b>Margaret Lydamore</b>  <u>melyd@btinternet.com</u></p>	<p><b>Website Editor</b>  <b>Mike Doran</b>  <u>mikedoran47@outlook.com</u></p>

**The Friends website** gives you all of the current news, meetings, events, publications, and membership information relating to the work of the Friends of Osterley Park in supporting Osterley House and Park. [www.e-voice.org.uk/friendsofosterleypark](http://www.e-voice.org.uk/friendsofosterleypark) Back copies of the newsletter are available on the website.

Next newsletter: to be published at beginning March 2025

