



# The Friends of Osterley Park



*A Supporters Group for the National Trust*

ISSUE 28

MARCH 1998

*Chairman's Letter*

*Ian Conacher*

This issue follows close on the heels of our New Year edition, circulated to give news of our Winter Lecture programme, and carries news of the sequence of Summer Visits which Jim Tickle has arranged for the coming months - details on a following page.

Jim has been arranging visits for the past 6 years, and the "Friends" members and Committee owe him a vote of thanks for all the hard work which he has put into the planning of these. Assembling a programme is not easy; some Properties are unable to confirm group bookings until well after the New Year, and the schedule, like a jigsaw, cannot be completed until all the pieces are available.

This year, Jim has arranged a 4-day trip to North Wales, with a most attractive itinerary. I hope that all members will study the details, and that a goodly number will make their reservations promptly, so that the coach and accommodation bookings can be confirmed.

Jim has, in past years, covered almost all properties within a reasonable radius of Osterley, and will have to consider making repeat trips to some of those visited in the early '90s. Please let him know if there are any locations to which a return would be welcome - possibly to view gardens at a different season from the original visit!

## *Membership Renewal*

The Membership year ends on 31st March. Please renew your subscription by using the renewal form enclosed with this issue.

## *'Friends' Summer Reception*

All members are invited to this event, which will be held on Wednesday, 3rd June, at 7.30 pm in the House. Members will be taken on a tour of the House, to see the flower arrangements carried out by volunteers. After a glass of wine on the lawn, there will be demonstrations of flower arranging in the Servants Hall.

It would help us in the planning of the event if members could indicate on their renewal form if they intend to be at this reception.

## *Major Summer Events*

Brief details of these were included as a late supplement to our last issue; Trust members will have received more information with the Regional Newsletter, together with a booking form. We repeat below the dates for your diaries: -

*Breakfast with the Birds* - Sunday 26th April, at **4.45am** -

the annual walk, to hear and identify the songsters in the dawn chorus. Lead by experienced bird-watchers from the R.S.P.B., followed by continental breakfast. Advanced booking essential - Tickets £7.50. Booking Ref. W4.

*Alice in Wonderland* - Wednesday 15th July, at 6.30 pm.

an open-air dramatisation of Lewis Carroll's classic for children of all ages, featuring a mix of live actors and puppets to present the story. Presented by a Company from "Illyria", whose performance of *Peter Pan* in the Park last year was well received. Tickets £8.00 Adult, £5.00 Child, £26 Family (2 Adults and up to 3 children). Booking Ref. A35. Gates open 6 pm. Bring a rug or chair and picnic before the show.

*Shakespeare in the Park* - Saturday 18th and Sunday 19th July, at 7 pm.

A company from "Illyria", who performed *The Tempest* for us last year, will this year present *The Taming of the Shrew* in the Pleasure Grounds. Those who saw last year's lively production, where all the parts were taken by four players, will appreciate that this style of presentation is more suited to a greenwood situation than to the formality of a seated audience in the stable-yard. Gates open at 6 pm - free parking - bring a rug or seating and picnic before the performance.

Tickets in advance £8.50 Adult, £5 Child, £25 family. Booking Ref. A38 (Sat), A39 (Sun). All tickets at gate £10.

*Glenn Miller Band Concert with Fireworks* - Saturday, 8th August, at 7.30 pm.

The welcome return of the Big Band Concert, with the hits of the 'forties. Dress in period costume, picnic on the lawn before the show. Gates open at 5.30 pm. Free parking. Tickets in advance £12.50 Adult, £6 Child, £28 family. Booking Ref. A49.

Bookings for the events listed above can be made through the Trust's Box Office at Hughenden Manor, by Telephone (after 30th March) on 01494 522234 - a charge of 75p will be made for credit card bookings - or by post to National Trust Box Office, PO box 180, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP14 4XT.

Alternatively, tickets can be purchased after April 1st at the Information Point in the Stable-yard at Osterley on days when the House is open.

## *Other Events at Osterley*

*Surrey Sculptors Exhibition* - 1st April - 4th May, in the Jersey Galleries. Works by talented sculptors for sale, in a variety of styles. Admission Free.

*Humber Spring Gathering* - Sunday 26th April, 10am - 5pm magnificently restored cars on display in the Park. No admission charge.

*Spring Plant Fair* - Sunday 17th May, 11am - 4pm. Stalls stocked by commercial growers and by the "Friends" and E.N.T.A. Gardening advice, guided walks, raffle, etc! No admission charge.

*National Gardens Scheme Open Day* - Sunday 31st May, 11am - 4pm.

The Walled Garden will be open and visitors can meet the staff who are restoring the Pleasure Grounds and the volunteers who grow flowers for the House. Admission to Walled Garden is £1.

*Live Crafts Fair* - Friday - Sunday, 12-14th June, 10am - 5pm. Over 150 stalls, with demonstrations and sales of original, contemporary, and traditional crafts. Admission £3.50 - free to National Trust Members on Friday only.

*Community Week, Sunday 5th July - Sunday 12th July.*

This begins with *Community Day* on the 5th, when from 11am to 5pm there will be displays by local artists and craftspeople. *Pictures in the Park* will be exhibited on the railings for sale, and there will be music and side-shows including the "Friends" celebrated Bric-a-Brac Stall! Admission and Car parking free!

This is followed in the evening by a performance of the *Covent Garden Minuet Dancers* at 7.30pm in the courtyard of the House - elegant 18th Century dancing in costume with an ideal setting, and an opportunity to join in the dance! Tickets £6, including a glass of wine.

The week continues with walks, talks, and exhibitions; details and booking instructions will be given in a leaflet to be published in the Spring.

*Poems in the Park*

We enclose details of a Poetry Competition which Barry Williams is organising. Winning entries will be displayed on a "Poetry Trail" around the Park during Community Week. Closing date is 31st May - so start rhyming now!

*Help Wanted!*

*Plants and Pots*

We hope that some members have already made plans to grow bedding plants for sale on the "Friends" stall at the Spring Plant Fair on May 17th. Exotic varieties would of course be welcome, but we shall be just as happy to receive anything that is simple to grow - marigolds and tomato plants are always sought after! Shrubs and house plants also sell well.

Ideally, plants should be "potted on" into three-and-a half inch pots ready for sale - any surplus pots of this size would be welcome! If you have plants or pots to offer, please ring Ian Conacher on 0181-560-8523 after Easter, so that we can arrange collection.

*Bric-a-brac*

Donations of costume jewellery, ornaments, and similar small items are sought for the "Friends" stall at the Community Day Fair on July 5th. Why not start assembling a box of bits and pieces now! Arrangements for collection will be made later - phone Audrey Conacher on 0181-560-8523 after the end of May, for details.

## *The New Season in the House and the Park*

This year, the House will open on Wednesday, 1st April. It is hoped that the redecoration of the Yellow Taffeta bedroom will be completed early in the season. Opening hours this year will be 2pm - 5pm from Wednesdays to Saturdays, and 1pm to 5pm on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

Visitors to the Park will see much activity between the Car Park and the causeway at the end of the garden lake. During 1998, it is planned to improve the soil in the area between the two lakes, and to plant new trees and shrubs. Temporary fencing will be erected to protect the new planting, and the new paths will be laid to allow access through the area. Visitors will be asked to keep to the paths, and to keep dogs on a lead until they reach the North-East meadow. As part of the improvements in this area, the Car Park itself is to be re-surfaced.

Maps and information boards are being posted in the area, and visitors who wish to know more about the work should ask the Wardens or any Estate Staff working nearby, who will be pleased to answer questions.

The "Friends" have donated two sets of tables and benches for the Picnic area which is being set up by the Car Park, for those visitors who wish to eat near their car before going into the House.

### *Volunteer Opportunities*

**Room Stewards.** To fully cover House opening times will call for the services of 70 or more Volunteer Room Stewards each week. Ideally, more than twice this number is desirable, so that each individual does one shift per fortnight, and there is cover for holidays. Extra help is urgently needed!

Volunteers may choose their own working pattern to suit their other commitments. The job does not demand a high level of specialist knowledge, but does on the other hand provide the chance of finding out more about the House, and of meeting other people with similar interests. A short training course is given, but there are no examinations to pass!

**Flower Arrangers.** To work with the team on Wednesday mornings, preparing the displays for the principal rooms in the House.

**Access and Mobility Volunteers.** To join the team making self-drive battery cars available for less mobile visitors to the Park, on Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday afternoons. Volunteers work two or three afternoons per month.

**Drivers** also needed for the electric courtesy car operating between the Car Park and the Stable-yard, during House opening times.

**Gardeners.** To work on the maintenance of the "Pleasure Grounds".

**Stable Helpers.** The working stables with horses are open to visitors on Sunday afternoons. Helpers keen to work with horses are needed to assist with this.

For further information, contact Sally Rogers on 0181 560 3918.

## *Winter Lectures*

A capacity audience came to St. Mary's Parish Hall on 4th February to hear Richard Pailthorpe speak on *Syon Park - Past, Present and Future*. His talk was illustrated with superb slides, and gave many insights into the development of the property. The concept that it was, in the eighteenth century, a summer palace, complementing Northumberland House in Westminster, has parallels with the history of Osterley.

We are hoping for similar success with the remaining talks. Seats are still available for *Satin, Snuff and Scandal* by Mark Wallis on 4th March, and for *Round and about Osterley* by Andrea Cameron on 18th March, both at 8pm.

## *Music in the Long Gallery*

For some years past, the Villiers Wind Ensemble, a group of local musicians lead by Howard Stephens, have been playing on selected Sunday afternoons in the Long Gallery providing a bonus to visitors to the House. Dates for this season have not yet been set, but will be published later.

## *A Peal of Bells*

"Friends" member Harold Rogers is well known in Isleworth as the Tower Captain in charge of bell-ringing at All Saints' Church, by the Thames. He was recently much involved in organising a repeat of a record established on 10th February 1848, when handbell ringers performed a peal of 5,093 changes of *Grandsire Cators* in a nearby pub, the London Apprentice. On the anniversary, this was completed in 2 hours and 20 minutes by a team assembled from all over the country - and was followed by a further peal on the bells of the church, in which Harold and other local ringers took part.

## *Birds at Osterley*

*Patricia Barrett*

Monthly counts for the Wetland Bird Survey continue and the information is fed into the national database. Those who visit Osterley's lakes will realise they are not one of the major locations for great numbers of wildfowl. The large reservoirs, gravel pits and estuaries support many hundreds of birds but we do have quite a variety including winter visitors.

The Survey for 1995-6 has just been published and I looked eagerly for a mention of our Osterley counts. Our Mandarin Duck population featured and I quote from the report "It is an introduced specie that has naturalised. Despite its obvious livery, the species' generally unobtrusive nature and its occurrence in wooded areas, albeit often close to parkland lakes, means that only a small proportion of the probably quite large British population is ever counted. Mandarin feed on acorns and beech mast during the winter months". I agree they are unobtrusive, sometimes we can only spot 4 or 5 but we have seen 24 at one time and there were several broods last year.

When you are walking by the lower lake towards the Osterley Lane end do look for Shoveller ducks, who usually only stay for the winter, they are about the same size as Mallards but with a large shovel bill. They can be seen going round and round in circles as if on a record turntable. The Great Crested Grebe are also busy with their delicate courtship. The Herons could well be sitting on eggs - look for their huge nests in the tops of the tallest trees on the island.

## 1998 EXCURSIONS PROGRAMME

Jim Tickle

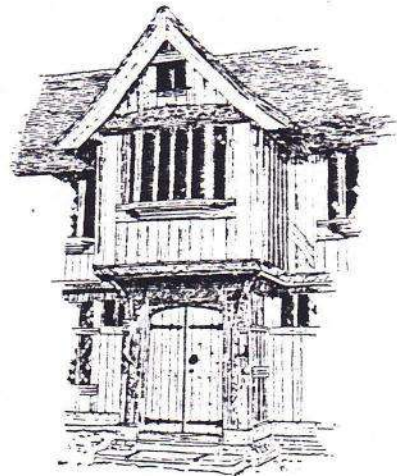
Since our regular series of excursions first commenced in 1993, it has become increasingly difficult to find other National Trust properties within a comfortable day's driving from Osterley. Nevertheless, I hope that members will agree that this season's plans still manage not only to avoid repetition, but also offer an exciting innovation in the proposed four-day tour of North Wales, based at the University of Bangor. But more of that later! Our normal day-trips will be as follows:

Saturday, 4th April ... Lavenham & Melford Hall, Suffolk  
Thursday, 14th May ... Sudbury Hall & Museum of Childhood, Derbyshire  
Wednesday 17th June ... Smallhythe Place & Lamb House, Kent & E. Sussex  
Tuesday, 7th July ... Vale of Pewsey & Avebury Manor, Wiltshire.  
Friday, 7th August ... Saffron Walden & Audley End, Essex  
Tuesday, 6th October ... Sheffield Park Garden, East Sussex.

All the above excursions will depart from Osterley House car park at 9.00 a.m. and expect to return home in the region of 7.00 p.m. The journey home from Derbyshire in May, however, could take a little longer! Note also that Audley End (August) is an English Heritage property and admission charges are listed on your Booking Form.

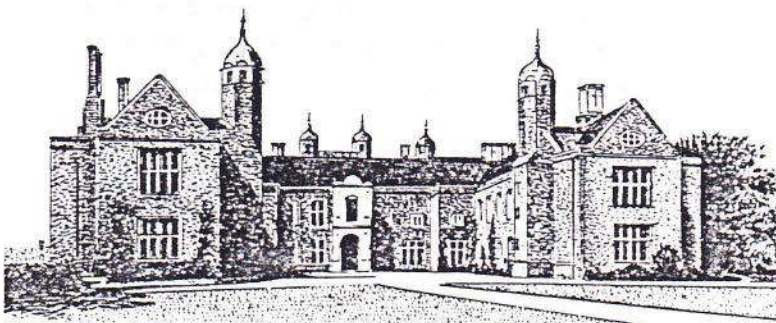
### Lavenham & Melford Hall

After leaving the motorway and passing en route through the picturesque Essex villages of Great Dunmow and Finchingfield, our first port of call in rural Suffolk is the charming little town of Lavenham, formerly a prosperous centre of the wool trade as is evidenced in its wonderfully preserved 15th century Guildhall (N.T). There are a number of remarkable ancient timbered houses and the Church contains good screen-work and the fine 'Spring' chapel, dating from 1525. Lavenham's inviting old hostleries make the town an ideal place to stop for our lunch-break.



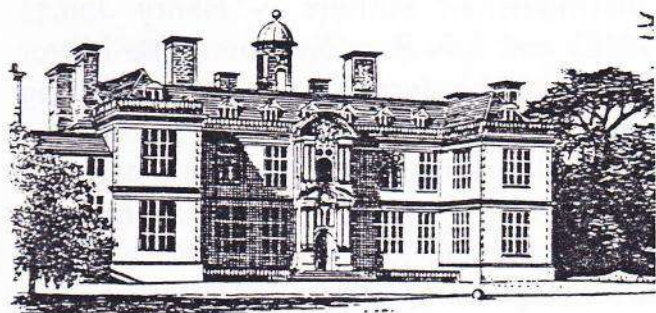
Taking the road to Sudbury ... (i.e. Suffolk, not Derbyshire. That's next month!), a short drive soon brings us to Long Melford and the imposing Tudor turrets of Melford Hall (N.T Handbook p. 175). Melford Hall was a contemporary of Thomas Gresham's

original Osterley House, being built in the latter half of the 16th century by Sir William Cordell. Like the Greshams, Cordell acquired Melford after the dissolution of the monasteries and also, like the Greshams and the Vicar of Bray, contrived to remain in royal favour during the factious reigns of Mary



and Elizabeth I. Less fortunate was a subsequent owner, the Countess Rivers, a staunch Catholic and Royalist, who was hounded out during the Civil War and died in a debtors' prison in 1650. Later additions to Melford Hall include an impressive Regency Library and Staircase designed in 1813 by the architect Thomas Hopper, whose work can also be seen in Penrhyn Castle and Erddig.

### *Sudbury Hall & Museum of Childhood*



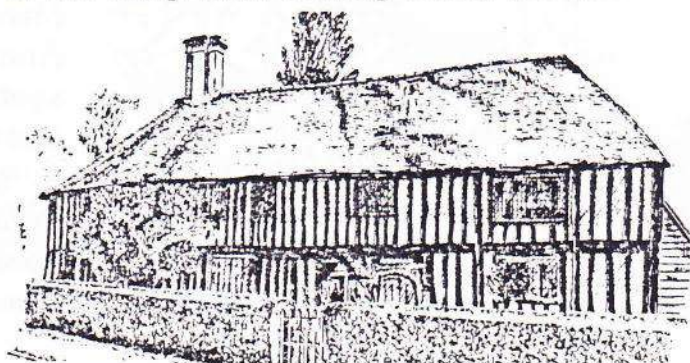
This is our most ambitious day-trip of the season and, including Kedleston ('93) and Calke Abbey ('97), our third foray into distant but delightful Derbyshire. Sudbury Hall (Handbook p. 224/5) offers the architectural and historical interest of a superb Stuart country house. Begun by George Vernon in 1661, it is a monument to his ambition to

make an impact on Restoration society. He created one of the most architecturally intriguing houses of the time. His plan was consciously outdated, but sumptuously and fashionably decorated with carvings by Pierce and Grinling Gibbons, superb plasterwork and decorative paintings by Laguerre. In the 19th century Queen Adelaide, the widow of William IV, spent some of her final years at Sudbury Hall after the accession of Queen Victoria. The Queen's Bedroom commemorates her stay and is furnished as it would have been for her reception. More recently the interiors of Sudbury Hall featured in the BBC Television production of 'Pride and Prejudice' as Pemberley, the home of Mr Darcy.

The Museum of Childhood is housed in the Hall's 19th century servants' wing and offers a glimpse into the experience of growing up during the last 100 years. Room sets demonstrate the extremes of opportunities, from the poverty of one family's cellar dwelling to the luxury of a wealthy nursery. The schoolroom may revive memories of a more disciplined era, but the 'handling collection' offers the chance to try one's hand at long-forgotten games and rediscover the delights of old-fashioned pastimes.

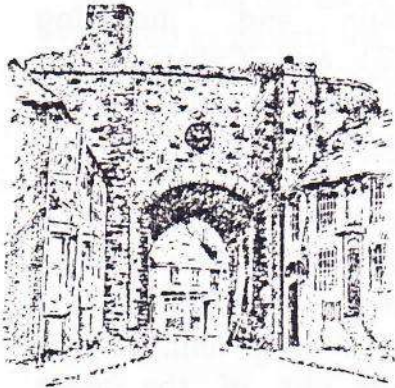
### *Smallhythe Place & Lamb House*

For our June outing we venture into the realms of literature and the theatre by way of two small, but very personalised properties. Smallhythe Place (Handbook p. 137) is a pretty, half-timbered house of the early 16th century which became the home of the celebrated Victorian actress, Ellen Terry, between 1899 and 1928. It houses much of her personal memorabilia and, in the garden, the Barn Theatre founded by Ellen Terry's daughter, Edith Craig, lists amongst its supporters such 20th century stage luminaries as Sybil Thorndike, Sir John Gielgud



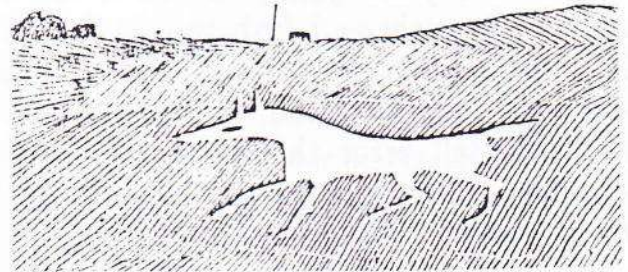
and Sir Donald Sinden. Due to restricted space, the custodian has kindly offered us a morning visit for us to 'trickle' through before the house opens to the general public. We shall therefore drive straight to Smallhythe Place and afterwards pass on to Tenterden for lunch. There are no refreshment facilities at Smallhythe, so you may feel it advisable to pack a thermos of coffee!

After lunch we head for Lamb House (Handbook p. 119) in the quaint little town of Rye. Lamb House, built in the early 18th century, was home to two distinguished authors, - Henry James (from 1898 to 1916) and E.F. Benson, sometime Mayor of Rye and creator of the formidable pair of Tilling termagants, Mapp and Lucia. (You may recall the hilarious TV series filmed here in Rye with Geraldine McEwen, Prunella Scales and Nigel Hawthorne.) Again the house is too small to accommodate a whole coach party, but there are a great many interesting attractions to see in the town as we divide into individual groups.



### *The Vale of Pewsey & Avebury Manor*

Leaving the A4 at Hungerford, a quieter scenic route follows the course of the Kennett and Avon Canal via Shalbourne and the old windmill at Wilton, through the thatched villages of East Grafton, Burbage and Fyfield and on into the heart of the beautiful Vale of Pewsey. On Milk Hill above Alton Priors there is a fine view of one of the many White Horses carved into the ancient rolling hillsides of Wiltshire. After lunch in the historic market town of Devizes, we follow the North Downs past prehistoric Silbury Hill, the largest artificial mound in Europe. Then, for the more adventurous (and weather permitting), a short walk up a footpath through fields rewards you with a visit to the burial chambers of the West Kennett Long Barrow, which dates from 3250 BC. The remains of some 46 New Stone Age people were excavated here, many of whom were proved to have suffered, perhaps not surprisingly, from arthritis and the corpse of one elderly man had an arrowhead in his throat!



In '93, en route to Lacock Abbey, we visited the Stones; but the purpose of today's visit is much more up to date. Avebury Manor is mainly Elizabethan, with Queen Anne and Edwardian features. Here again, numbers visiting the Manor at any one time are limited, but should you have to wait your turn, a pleasant meander through the numerous 'rooms' of the flower and topiary gardens can be very relaxing.

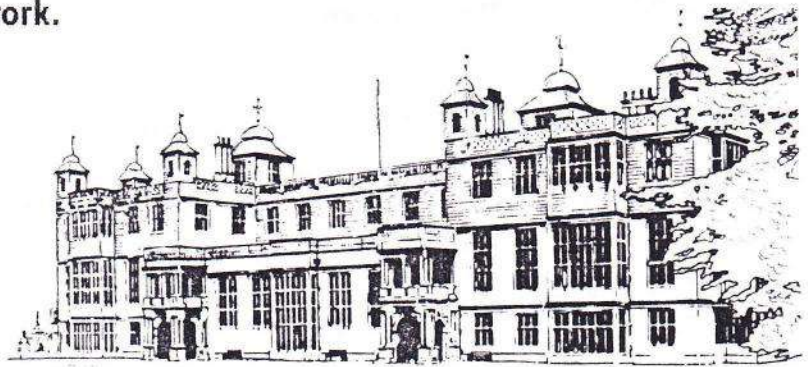




## *Saffron Walden & Audley End*

Our drive through Essex takes us past the pretty village of Thaxted, once home to the notorious highwayman, Dick Turpin, and then on for lunch in the market town of Saffron Walden. The town draws its name from the vast carpets of saffron crocus grown here in the 16th and 17th centuries, bringing prosperity to local industries producing dyes, condiment, medicines and perfume. On the common land to the east of the town is an unusual and mysterious maze cut into the turf. Though first documented in 1699, its origin is thought to be prehistoric. In the 19th century an elaborate courtship game was played on it, with swains trying to find their way to a girl at the centre, and even today it provides considerable entertainment for children and visitors. In the well preserved town centre there are a number of remarkable buildings, many of them decorated with the traditional Essex craft of 'pargeting', - relief designs in moulded plasterwork.

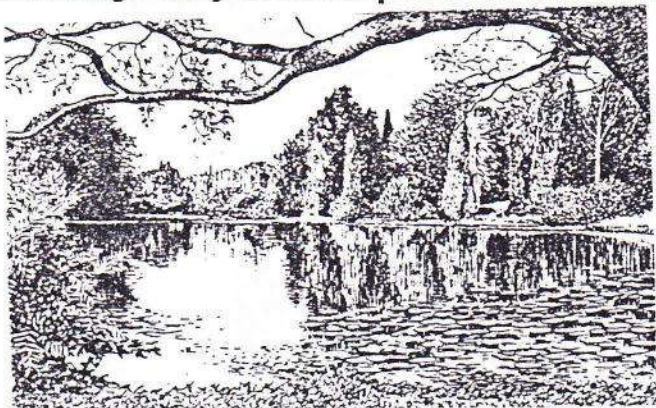
Compared with Osborne House, Carisbrooke Castle and Battle Abbey, Audley End ranks highly amongst the major properties of English Heritage. Built in 1603 for Thomas Howard, 1st Earl of Essex, who became Lord High Treasurer, the house was originally far



larger and prompted James I to remark that it was 'too big for a King, but might do for the Lord Treasurer'! However, it soon became a Royal Palace when in 1668 it was acquired by Charles II after Suffolk's fall from power. Most of Audley End's Jacobean splendour still remains, despite major developments that occurred in the 18th century when the first Lord Braybrooke employed Robert Adam and Capability Brown to re-design some of the interiors and the parkland; and though, till as recently as 1941, subsequent members of the family have occupied and placed their personal stamp on the house, several of Adam's rooms and garden features have survived intact.

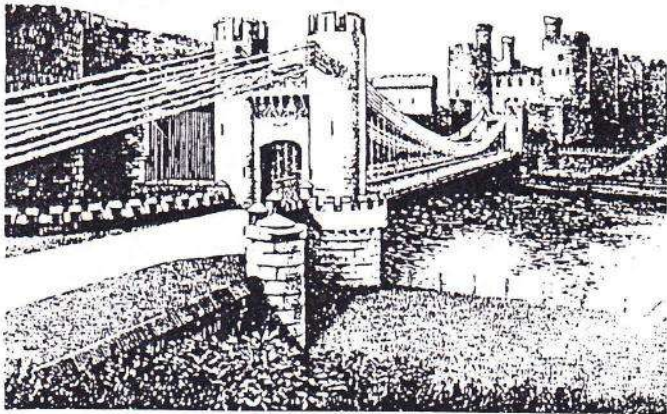
## *Sheffield Park Garden*

Although fully detailed plans for this outing are yet to be finalised, October 6th has been chosen to take advantage of the dazzling burst of Autumn colour magnificently displayed at Sheffield Park Garden at this time of year. Anyone who also happens to be a Steam Railway enthusiast is probably aware that the Sheffield Park Station of the 'Bluebell Line' is just across the road and is well worth a brief visit.



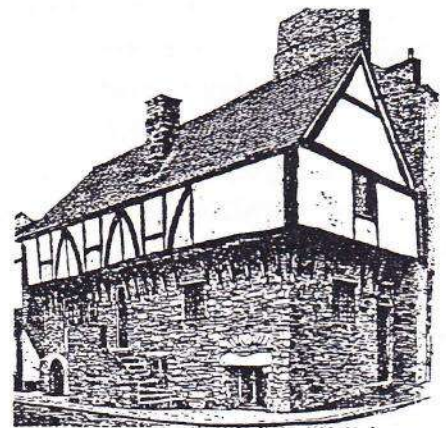
## **FOUR-DAY BREAK IN NORTH WALES**

Thursday, 3rd - Sunday, 6th September



Our excursion in September will be breaking new and exciting ground, extending our visit to four full days exploring the coastline, countryside, houses, castles and gardens of one of the loveliest areas of the British Isles. From Anglesey to the Vale of Llangollen, between the sandy beaches of the North Wales coast and the majesty of Snowdonia, lies a world of wonderment and natural delights.

Among the properties of the National Trust that we would hope to visit are the lofty castles of Chirk, Powis and Penrhyn, the stately splendour of Erddig and Plas Newydd, and 14th century Aberconwy House close to Thomas Telford's early 19th century Suspension Bridge spanning the river to Conwy Castle. High above the River Conwy, with spectacular views across Snowdonia, we shall linger awhile to admire the formal and natural beauty of Bodnant Garden.



For our stay, we will be accommodated on a half-board basis (dinner, bed and breakfast) in single, en suite rooms with tea/coffee making facilities in the modern residential complex of the University of Bangor. Coach travel throughout will be organised by European Heritage Tours with the personal service of our usual friendly and experienced driver, Barrie Pyle. Departure will be from designated pick-up points on Thursday morning, 3rd September, returning in the evening of Sunday, 6th September. The total cost of this holiday, exclusive to Friends and Volunteers of Osterley Park, is £160.

If you wish to take advantage of this special offer, please complete the Reservation Slip accompanying this Newsletter. No money is required as yet, but a non-returnable deposit of £20 will be payable before the end of April, and the balance of £140 by Saturday, 1st August.

