

Year of Treasures at Osterley... Reflections

The National Trust is 125 years old and Osterley House is celebrating. But what does this mean in 2021. It says that if you have a clear vision about preserving heritage and open spaces it can pay massive dividends and you can succeed



The exhibition in November celebrates favourite places, objects, texts and people - chosen by visitors, staff and volunteers. Here are some of my mine

1688: the beginning of modern financial age ... joint stock companies thrive, there are new opportunities for entrepreneurs and bankers... the start of an unprecedented period of prosperity. When you are a winner, have gained success you set out to reap your rewards- spectacular homes and works of art.

The fabulous Osterley House and Park was built in the 1570s, acquired by Sir Francis Child, in 1713. The renowned Scottish architect Robert Adam remodelled it between 1761 and 1780 along classical lines, inspired by his grand tours of Italy



The Child Family story is all about a desire to hire the best people. It is also about the will and the resources to create a lasting legacy

The awesome Entrance Hall is trademark Adam: symmetrical, neo classical, pattern on floor reflecting the ceiling, great attention to detail. It was designed to impress, entertain and relax



People make Osterley: Graham, head of garden volunteering and Edwin, volunteer and mentor.

People are at the heart of a sustainable great visitor experience

The walled garden is a riot of colour... Mrs Childs wanted to be able to see this from her bedroom



Beauty is Truth and Truth Beauty..... John Keats. Effortless grace is never effortless- beneath the surface the swan paddles relentlessly against the current.

Pleasures: it starts with the drive from the entrance gate past the cattle grazing fields, then a delightful walk from the car park, past the serene lake and park to the Tudor Stables.



Osterley House is a location of choice for film and television production companies - ITV's recent adaptation of Vanity Fair was filmed here

Celebrating Nature, Beauty with History: National Trust's partnership with Sky and other companies who share and are committed to environmental objectives, is surely a win win proposition for both parties.

Countryside on London's doorstep. Idyllic rural scene: cattle grazing in the fields on a summers day. The 360 acre estate was gifted to the National Trust in 1949 by 9th Earl of Jersey,

A condition of gifting this magnificent estate to the nation the family wished the people to enjoy the park at no charge: joggers, dogwalkers bikers, kayakers and others use it regularly



The Garden House is also grade 1 listed building also designed by Robert Adam as a display house for rare and interesting plants. He probably met and discussed his ideas with Capability Brown, radical landscape gardener

Echoes of Monty Don's Secret History of the British Garden, 18th century, talked about radical transformation of landscape, controlling nature, making everything appear natural.....gardens became increasingly informal, representing confidence, status and wealth. The colourful garden has recently been restored from drawings

England's Magnificent Gardens: Hothouses of Inventions sheds light on stately home builders as pioneers of innovation for industrial revolution and canals



We take it for granted that when we visit Osterley House that we will be safe and our visit will be a great experience.

Behind the scenes: there is enormous amount of leadership and teamwork in the Property, Collections, Gardens Ranger and other departments to make sure that everything runs smoothly.



For our Tomorrow: newly planted tree for future generations to enjoy. It is about sustainability, climate change awareness, use of renewable energy among other things .

Alongside oak, birch and lime are exotic French, Chinese and Japanese trees... the garden is at its most colourful and beautiful in springtime and autumn



The Child family lived mainly in their residence at Berkley Square, Mayfair. Garden parties at their Osterley retreat must have been a source of enormous pleasure to the Child family and their guests.

Osterley Park and Garden was always a personal favourite National Trust property over the years, being easy to reach, with something of interest whatever the season.



In 2019 National Trust acquired the iconic painting of St Agatha, early Christian martyr, by Carlo Dolci (1616-1687) for Osterley House, funded by grants and donations.

According to the guide it is a dramatic depiction of Agatha of Sicily, it captures the miraculous moment when Saint Peter the Apostle appeared to her in a vision and healed her wounds. (courtesy of National Trust images)

The 18th century painting of Temple Bar, ornamental gateway in the Green Corridor shows the principal ceremonial entrance to the City of London from City of Westminster. The Child Bank was at 1 Fleet Street. Temple Bar, designed by Christopher Wren, was re erected at St Paul's Paternoster Square in 2004

Neo Classical restrained elegance:
In the Entrance Hall are statues of four gods, stucco panels display and Adam's trademark fireplaces

The superb Library was also designed to impress: it has white ceiling, white fittings, which contrast with the paintings and books .

The opulent Drawing Room has a stunning ceiling, fine English carpet, furniture, mirrors and candelabra. .



Britain's empire lasted for 4 centuries and contributed to the wealth underpinning many country houses and estates. The profits of empire came at a cost to many colonised people. The Trust aims to help us to understand our histories.

Colonialism formed the basis of immigration to UK mainly in the 1960s; cultural awareness is about harnessing diversity



Museum of the Mind:

Royal Mail issued special stamps in 1995 to mark the centenary of the National Trust. The other stamps in the set featured the core activities:

- Protecting Land
- Conserving Art
- Saving Coast
- Repairing property



I joined as a House Welcome Volunteer and Room Guide at Osterley after retiring in July. The mentoring was useful and helpful: one also learns much from other volunteers

I guess my passion for the English countryside started at school with geography, history and geology field trips to North Downs, Gower and Shropshire, amongst others

There is a feeling of being in a place with tremendous amount of history

A Volunteer Guide's role is to provide a brief introduction to the visitors as they enter and answer their questions

Though it sounds like a cliché it has been great to meet and greet people, hear their stories. I have also gained knowledge about other amazing National Trust properties to visit



Meet the Money Men - The Child Family Story

Extract from the press release in November 2019 for the Osterley Exhibition by John Chu, National Trust curator

The exhibition explores the meteoric rise of a banking family through the treasures they collected. The splendour of west London's Osterley Park and House is known to many, but the story of the banking family whose fortune created the estate has not been fully explored.

The Child family counted monarchs, mathematicians and actors as customers at their bank, but now the family themselves will be in the spotlight. This winter an exhibition will use the works of art and fine furniture the family collected to shed new light on their rapid rise and the world in which they lived. John Chu, National Trust Assistant Curator of Pictures and Sculpture explains:

“The Child family's road to fortune began in the late 17-century with Sir Francis Child, one of the first English goldsmiths to move into what we would now recognize as modern banking during the Financial Revolution which transformed the nation's economy.

The rise of the Child family was quite meteoric. They were major investors in London's emerging stock markets, and their family banking business on Fleet Street competed with the newly founded Bank of England to lend to the government at high rates of interest. Despite the inherently risky nature of such a venture, Sir Francis and his sons went from strength to strength, and as their wealth grew, so did the number of treasures we can now see at Osterley.”

The exhibition begins by introducing visitors to the individuals in the family who made their banking business the most successful of its kind in Britain. Their prominent clients included Sir Isaac Newton, monarchs William and Mary and Nell Gwyn.

John Chu continues: “This exhibition is a chance to explore the opportunistic world of financial speculation and gritty commerce of three centuries ago. It's about a family who played for high stakes and came up trumps as other big speculators fell prey to the era's booms and busts. “Visitors will be able to glimpse beneath the splendid surface of the family's prized possessions to discover their significance. What did these objects mean to the Childs and to the original cultures that created them at a transformative time in international trade and finance?

The original house at Osterley was built by Sir Thomas Gresham (?1519-79), who entertained Queen Elizabeth I there at least twice. In 1713 Osterley Park and House were acquired by the goldsmith banker Sir Francis Child the Elder (1642-1713) and it was his grandsons, Francis III and Robert Child who employed Robert Adam to transform the house, which is a showcase of his work.

The Child family had key roles in the East India Company and many of the interiors were shaped by luxury items such as lacquer furniture, Chinese wallpaper, mirror paintings, Indian fabrics and east Asian ceramics. Osterley passed to George Villiers, 5th Earl of Jersey, in 1804, and it was the 9th Earl of Jersey who opened Osterley to the public in 1939, with 12,000 people visiting in the first month alone. Ownership of Osterley transferred to the National Trust in 1949 and many of the family portraits left the house at this time.

The National Trust leased the house and grounds to the Ministry of Works, which maintained the property until 1991, when the Trust took over the running of Osterley.