



FRIENDS' NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2025: Issue 111

News from the Director

It has been a glorious Summer in so many ways with some wonderful activities and events laid on throughout the Estate. While many have, rightly, lamented the lack of rain, when it did come it seemed to choose those weekends on which we were hosting some of our landmark Festivals. The South Downs Food Festival was certainly blighted to a degree by downpours as was our Summer Festival. The tendency of weather forecasters and agencies such as the BBC to overplay the warnings so that they can't be accused of missing a 1987 style event does lead to many people heeding them and staying at home.



However, it is also quite clear that Stansted Park benefits from legions of stalwart folk stoical enough to venture out and defy the doomsters, determined as they are to cope with the vagaries of the English Summer and enjoy themselves! This was demonstrated in no uncertain terms during the performance of the Portsmouth Batala Drummers during the Summer Festival who persevered, along with their audience, through a torrential downpour - the show must go on!



There has been no shortage of events to keep everyone entertained ranging from Open Air Cinema, Theatre and Opera to the Super Car Rally. We are delighted that our new Proms Partner, Montserrat Events, delivered a superlative show with spectacular music, air displays and fireworks.

My thanks to all those Friends who willingly give up their time to support all of our activities - it does seem that the lure of driving the Mobility Buggy is proving to be irresistible!

We have managed to host a couple of corporate days. A local company brought 400 of their workforce for a fun day out in July and, in September, a French motor oil company is bringing their clients to the Mansion for dinner following their attendance at The Goodwood Revival. It is in this area that we are looking to enhance our corporate offers and benefit from our proximity to Goodwood.

Our commercial offices remain in a state of flux and we have had to reconfigure several spaces to make them more attractive to small businesses. We are becoming a bit of a hub for beauticians but we do have an incredible array of enterprises here and their determination to make a success of their operations in challenging economic circumstances is really impressive. The retail outlets also seem to be doing well and there is no doubt that Stansted Park remains a great place to do business with the allure of a country estate being highly beneficial.

The Estate is examining the options to develop a couple of commercial units in the Maze Courtyard to meet the demand from businesses who wish to take advantage of the significant footfall through the Park. It is intended that this project will also encompass the development of the new Visitors' Information Point opposite the Farm Shop. It has been agreed that the latter element will be funded by the Friends for which the Foundation is extremely grateful. We are currently looking at the design of the structure as well as the technical detail of how information about the Estate can best be presented as well as providing a facility to purchase tickets and donate; I will keep you updated.

In the meantime, I would like to thank all the Friends for their continuing support to the Foundation without which we would not be able to accomplish nearly as much as we do currently.

David Bennett



Head Forester Notes

The weather is the major focus of any rural based conversations at present as it is affecting just about everyone managing or using land. I do not think I have known it this dry since the Great Drought of 1976, the year I started work and we are beginning to really see the effects now. Many trees are starting to go into an early autumn and recently planted trees and hedging are already suffering. We have also lost a few ornamental trees although I believe this is due to disease, possibly exacerbated by the dry conditions putting trees under stress but as yet I do not know the extent of losses amongst the new plantings from the last two seasons.

One tree I am particularly sad to lose is the Lacebark Pine (*Pinus bungeana*) in the arboretum. The late Alan Mitchell, the Forestry Commission's Senior Dendrologist and a man with an encyclopaedic knowledge of trees had designed an arboretum for the Elton Estate where I was previously employed. It had just been planted when I first went there but some trees were missing as they were difficult to get. One was this pine and when I tracked it down, I got two. On moving south, I brought the spare tree with me which was doing well in a pot in my garden at the time and planted as part of the first replanting I carried out in the arboretum. It is a very slow growing tree but once it gets to a reasonable size exhibits the same flaking bark with multi-coloured under-bark patches like a London Plane.



Lacebark Pine, bark detail

We have decided to carry out all of the work in Oak Copse in house rather than use an outside contractor, so Sam, Colin and Terry have been very busy recently with cutting all the understorey in preparation for felling the diseased ash which dominate the centre of this wood. The hazel understorey if big enough has been extracted to be dried and eventually chipped as bio-fuel. The ash will be predominantly sold as firewood unless there are a few stems that make saw timber. The hazel branch wood and any decayed ash will be used to create habitat piles throughout the wood. I intend to replant the large central area this coming winter with a mix of oak, cherry, lime and wild service tree plus a few disease resistant elms if I can get some.



Understorey removed leaving dying ash to be felled

I was pleased to be contacted by an ex-forestry student who did some training here many years ago and now has his own woodland management and crafts business centred on the wood his family own. He was looking for young birch saplings to make traditional besom brooms from and so he removed the birch from a young conifer plantation which helped the development of the crop trees and gave him a free source of material to use in his business, a win-win situation. At about the same time I found that the Forestry Commission Woodland Creation Officer who is dealing with our plan for a new plantation on Castle Field is also an ex-student who did training here and so it was great to catch up with him and hear how his career has developed.

Michael Prior

Summer in the gardens...

After a very dry summer and the challenges that brings to a garden, we are now rushing towards September and the beginning of autumn. The flower beds will begin to slow down, though, I have started to introduce some late flowering perennials, which by next year will be very evident towards the end of summer. These include *Helenium* 'Moerheim Beauty', *Nepeta* 'Six Hills Giant', *Calamintha nepeta* and *Alchemilla mollis*. We will continue splitting and dividing plants in the central borders to increase balance and longevity. I am hoping to plant some varieties of *Hamamelis*, which will provide wonderful rich colours in the spring and are an early source of nectar and pollen. *Abelia x grandiflora* and other shrubs will be placed throughout the borders and some of our established larger shrubs pruned accordingly.

Planting in autumn is a very good approach if we are to have more drought summers, as the roots have the opportunity to reach out into the soil and so are more self-sufficient through the following summer months. This autumn activity requires cutting down of perennials from September but in the Well Head we are now developing a more relaxed approach to encourage wildlife. These beds will be cut down later in the winter to ensure homes for beneficial bugs for the whole garden.



Gardening for biodiversity in a small area of the garden not only seems to have been thoroughly enjoyed by visitors but also allows us to understand the benefits regarding protection for roots and moisture retention. We have had some wonderful feedback and conversations with the public regarding varying approaches around the different areas of the garden and the peace and tranquillity, which is evident around the Well Head. I have included photos from this part of the garden taken by a regular visitor who was entranced by the butterfly cloud he walked into a few weeks ago. All areas of the garden are now buzzing with bees and the butterflies are in much fewer numbers. Photos below are taken by Neal Scott.



Common brimstone



Large white



Peacock

Of course, we have some wonderful tree species to look out for the in autumn and so keep eyes peeled for the wide variety of Acer and the stunning colours of Ginkgo biloba and Liriodendron tulipifera (tulip tree). Enjoy the autumn and let's hope that the dry summer is a prelude to the weather we need to create wonderful colours as it could also encourage leaf drop. Here's hoping!!

Jan Atkinson, Contract gardener

Stansted Park Foundation Bookshop

Thinking about Christmas and what to get. Why not visit the Stansted Foundation Second-hand bookshop in the Stansted Garden Centre. Lots of lovely smaller good quality books that will make excellent stocking fillers. If you are into Christmas fiction, these will go on sale at the beginning of November. If someone you know has a favourite Author, why not buy them a set of First Edition Hardbacks for their bookshelf. There are many good quality books in all subjects waiting for new homes. We look forward to seeing you.



Regular Events

St Paul's Chapel Monthly Prayer Meetings



Just a little reminder that the next midday service will be Thursday 4th September at 12.00pm and then again on

Thursday 2nd October. There will not be a service in November or December due to the Armistice Service in November and Christmas services, this will start again on Thursday the 8th January and continue on the first Thursday of each month as before.

Complimentary light refreshments will also be served after the service - tea/coffee/biscuits. Entrance will be via the Pavilion Tearoom, through the Dutch Garden Gate to the Chapel. Everyone is always most welcome; and it would be appreciated by our Housekeeping Team if you can let us know if you are likely to attend so we can make sure we cater for enough people.

Guided Tours of Stansted House

The last tour of 2025 will be on Sunday, 7th September

If you want any further information regarding these regular events please phone the Office on 023 9241 2265 Option 5



What we've done recently...

Late Spring Walk – 25th May 2025

A group of 24 members joined Michael Prior for his May walk, passing huge stacks of recently cut timber, and then Michael's favourite tree on the whole Estate, which he admired for its incredible resilience rather than its beauty - an ancient oak whose main trunk had been broken off in the 1987 storm, but which had regenerated from a side branch and had produced a beautiful crown. A single ash had been spared because it was hollow, and probably a home for bats, and therefore protected.

Near Horse Pasture Farm, Michael explained that the Estate was planning to plant part of an arable field in order to create a new strip of woodland, some 60m wide and 600m long, alongside the Main Avenue.



Along the Sussex Border Path, we passed fields retained as wild areas, for breeding lapwings, and yellow hammers, with a strip of wildflowers, as a source of food for pollinating insects, where we watched two hares racing across the field. An area here would be planted with a crop to provide winter feed for wild birds.

Through Lyles Wood was an area of hazel coppice rented from the Estate by a craftsman who made craft products.

Another fascinating and well spent afternoon in the company, and under the guidance, of Michael Prior, thank you.

With thanks to Andy Rackham for this article...

Visit to Athelhampton House – 18th June 2025

On a fine June day, 38 Friends went by coach to Athelhampton House. The house is acknowledged as being one of England's finest Tudor Manor's constructed in 1485 and as the years passed a fine example of the Tudor and Elizabethan periods



Of particular interest is the Great Hall which remains greatly unchanged with the original hammer beam roof carved stonework and stained-glass windows.

There have been many owners over its life and a feature of the Great Hall are the stained-glass windows where each owner has their own coat of arms depicted in stained glass.

The house had been extensively changed and restored over its life with the last restoration over the past two to three years by the new owner. The latest is the kitchen where the original fireplace has been exposed with some impressive brickwork above.

The house itself is comparatively small with many usable rooms. The current owner and his family utilise many of the rooms when they visit

When we arrived, after time for a coffee, we went into the Great Hall where we had an introduction to the house. This was very useful as it gave us a historical overview before the detailed tour.

We were divided into two groups one to the West side of the building and the other to the East side with a swap over halfway.

Each group had a guide who were excellent and had a detailed knowledge of the house.





The guides presented well and included many anecdotes which added to our enjoyment of the tour. Of particular interest was a priest hole, well concealed which led to an underground room where services could be held for the family and some stairs to a sleeping/resting small chamber.

The gardens around the house are in small 'compartments'. These areas are bounded by tall yew hedges and all have a water feature of a pond or fountain, very tranquil spaces. The Great Court has 12 giant yew trees each shaped like a pyramid.

The staff are very friendly and helpful and there is a café with a very good menu to round off the day.

A visit that was enjoyed by everyone.

Chris Freeborough



Summer Supper Party – Thursday, 26th June

On a beautiful evening in June the Friends gathered once again for the annual Summer Party.

With sparkling wine or soft drinks in the Walled Garden on arrival and catching up with friends old and new it is an event not to be missed. It is, after all, an important one in our social calendar and includes Clare's delicious buffet supper, partaken in the Pavilion Tearoom.

Our Chairman, Nigel Smith, gave a short welcoming speech thanking all the volunteers, who give of their time to make our Summer Party so special, and to the Pavilion staff for their sterling work and attention.

The raffle, the much looked forward to event, and thanks to the continued generosity of Friends donating a variety of prizes and organised as usual by Joan Felton, made the presentation table brimming with exciting prizes. With over £200 taken, a big thank you goes to all who participated.

The support by Friends, this year, was down on previous years but that did not prevent a wonderful evening and, it certainly goes towards the making of an outstanding occasion.

Robert Godwin



Stansted Summer Festival Weekend – 19th – 20th July 2025

The Festival was a wonderful weekend and, in spite of early rain and one torrential downpour, was a delightful mix of browsing, food, drumming, marching, music, and activities for all the family – the undoubted highlight was the Napoleonic encampment and stirring re-enactments taking place behind the House.

Many of you will be familiar with the Friends' promotional stand at the Foundation's main events, where volunteer Friends engage with the visitors, distribute information and leaflets, show visitors what FOSP is all about, and promote the Estate. Our neighbouring stand housed the Foundation's Pop Up Bookshop, which did a booming trade in Napoleonic and military based books.





Our prime position, in the green gazebo at the front of the House, was also used as the focal point for David's information and announcements, and for the sale of the delightful Stansted Bears, or rather Stan Teds!

The Mobility Buggy, bought for the Foundation by FOSP, was parked alongside ready for action. This has proved to be an extremely useful and much used vehicle for the Foundation, not only for its main purpose for transporting our elderly and disabled visitors between the House, Chapel and car park but, at the Festival, was called in for the ferrying of a large number of musical instruments for the various bands playingand as seating for a well-deserved break!

A huge thank you to our friendly and willing volunteers who man the stand.



Cream Tea – Thursday, 14th August 2025

Another splendid afternoon was spent by members at our annual Cream Tea, chatting with friends, whilst enjoying the musical talents of Vanessa Bowler at the grand piano, in the beautiful setting of the Main Hall and Music Room of the House. This excitement was interrupted briefly by an impromptu fire alarm and evacuation, which thankfully everyone took in their stride.



Special thanks to the team of volunteers who give their time serving and baking cakes, we really appreciate their support.

COLLECTORS Corner

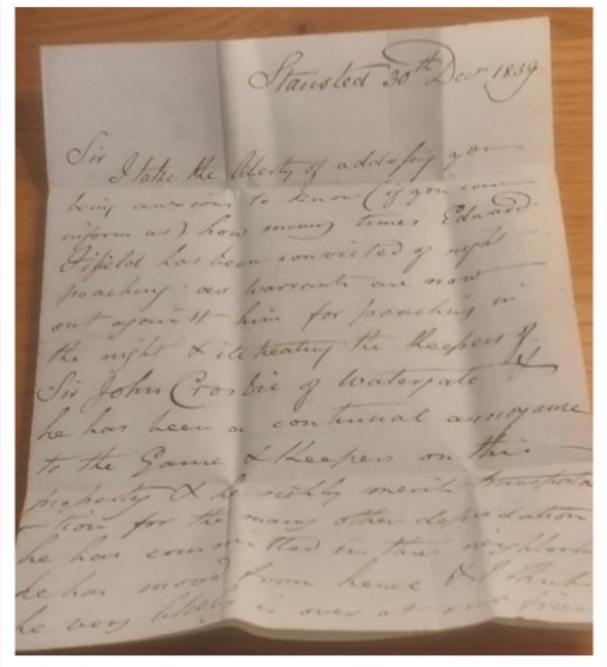
Contribution by
Vanessa Bowler

Inn, Midhurst.' The subject is poaching on the Stansted estate and reads as follows:

"I take the liberty of addressing you being anxious to know if you can inform me how many times Edward Fifield has been convicted of night poaching as warrants are now out against him for poaching in the night and mistreating the Keeper of Sir John Crosbie of Watergate. He has been a continual annoyance to the game and keepers on this property and he highly merits transportation for the many other depredations he has committed in the neighbourhood. He has moved from hence. I think he very likely is over at our friend Sir Charles Taylor's at Hollycombe. Our keepers are determined to take him if they find him in our vicinity."

Enclosed is also the reply from the clerk reporting that Fifield has never been convicted and that normally letters with requests such as these are pre-paid. However, filed with this letter is another draft sent three months later in which the clerk states that after reviewing some older records he has discovered that Fifield has after all been previously convicted for poaching in 1834 and 1835. He ends by asking Charles Dixon to send in the warrant for Fifield's arrest.

...and if you, or anyone you know, have something interesting to share please let us know...





Guided Walks in Stansted Park

The Late Summer Guided Walk with Michael Prior planned for Wednesday, 3rd September was cancelled due to bad weather.

We welcome everyone on these walks but they are a membership benefit of belonging to FOSP. If you would like to take non-member friends with you we would ask that they consider either joining or make a voluntary donation by phoning the Estate Office on 023 9241 2265, option 5.

What's coming up...

**“of Wars and Petticoats” –
Thursday, 2nd October @ 10:00am
and 12:30am**



Of Wars and Petticoats

Thursday 2nd October 2025 10.00 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.

Bringing the House to Life, a chance to catch up and listen to three 15-minute talks given on specialist subjects, including:-
"The Ponsonby Women, Waterloo Sword, and St Paul's Chapel".
Refreshments will be served upon arrival.



After the talks you will be able to join one of the following personally guided tours:-

Option 1 – The Ponsonby Women

- or -

Option 2 – The Servant Quarters focusing on those who worked at Stansted House.



Members £10.00
(non members £12.00)
Choose your tour option when you book.

“Deer in the southeast: their impact and management” – Thursday, 23rd October @ 2:00pm

Organised by Chris Freeborough, this will be a talk by Jody

...and apologies – this was wrongly dated on the diary page of the Summer Newsletter as being on Tuesday instead of **THURSDAY, 23rd October** – well spotted Robert Godwin 😊

Orchard from the Forestry Commission who will provide some historical background on how the current situation has arisen and then talk about what species we typically get in the southeast. He will also talk about what options are in terms of deer management and the protection of woodland from the impacts (including briefly touching on those that are often suggested as alternatives to culling).

Yuletide Tea – Wednesday, 3rd December 2025 @ 3:00pm

We are delighted to announce that the Yuletide Tea is back and will take place in December, with tickets going on sale on the 3rd November. You must advise us of your dietary and House access requirements at the point of booking. We very much look forward to welcoming you

FEEDBACK PLEASE...

If you have any suggestions, ideas or articles for future Newsletters please contact me at peter.dudman1@virginmedia.com

The copy date for articles for the Winter FOSP Newsletter is 17th October 2025.

Hard copies of the Newsletter are available from the Estate Office on request.



Members of the Friends of Stansted Park
Yuletide Tea in the Mansion
on Wednesday 3rd December at 3.00 p.m.

Mulled wine on arrival, followed by a selection of finger sandwiches, savouries, mince pies and cakes.
Tea and coffee will also be served.
Tickets £12.50 for Members, Non-Members £15.00



Diary Dates

To see the full itinerary of coming events and house tours either visit the Stansted website www.stanstedpark.co.uk.whatson, or contact the Office by email - enquiry@stanstedpark.co.uk or phone 023 9241 2265, option 5. FOSP Members can get discounts on most Foundation Events. Contact the Office with your Membership number for discount codes.

FRIENDS OF STANSTED HOUSE EVENTS

"Of Wars and Petticoats" - see page 7 for more information..... Thursday, 2nd October @ 10:00am-12:30pm
"Deer in the southeast: their impact and management" - see page 7 for more information Thursday, 23rd October @ 2:00pm
a talk by Jody Orchard from the Forestry Commission
Yuletide Tea - see page 7 for more information Wednesday, 3rd December @ 3.00pm

How to get here: Unless otherwise directed, please use the North Entrance to attend FOSP events. Drive through the automatic gates, veer to the right where the drive forks and park in front of the House.

FOUNDATION EVENTS

September onwards - use the underlined links to web pages for more information

Audience Choice Austen - Pride & Prejudice or Emma!..... Saturday, 6th September, 6:00pm-8:00pm
Doors open 5:00pm - in the walled garden
Alfa Romeo Car Rally Sunday, 7th September, 10:00am - 4:00pm
Music Afternoon - with Jimmy Alderson, in the Music Room Thursday, 11th September - doors open 2:00pm for 2:30pm
Heritage Open Day - the Stansted Theatre Tuesday, 16th September, 11:00am - 11:45am
Calligraphy Workshop with Jodie Rose Calligraphy Friday, 19th September, 10:00am - 12:30pm
Heritage Open Day - Scallywags..... Friday, 19th September, 10:30am - 11:00am
Torchlight Murder Mystery..... Friday, 19th September - doors open 7:00pm for 7:30pm
Elizabeth I's 1591 Progress - Talk Wednesday, 24th September - doors open 1:30pm, talk 2:00pm - 3:30pm
Drinks Reception - Army Benevolent Fund..... Thursday, 25th September 6:00pm - 8:00pm
(includes Field Gun Demonstration)
Evening Guided Tour - The Women of Stansted Park Friday, 26th September 6:00pm - 8:00pm
Spectral Nights - Paranormal Investigations Saturday, 27th September, 7.00pm - midnight
In Conversation with Essie Fox Tuesday, 30th September, 7:00pm - 9:00pm, doors open at 6:30pm
(discussing her latest novel, "Dangerous")
Final House Opening for the Season **Tuesday, 30th September**
Halloween Outdoor Cinema - save the date Friday, Saturday & Sunday, 3rd, 4th, 5th October
Music Afternoon - with the Ensemble Concertante Clarinet Quartet..... Thursday, 9th October, 2:30pm, doors open at 2:00pm
Stansted House Wedding Showcase Sunday, 12th October, 11:00am - 3:00pm
Armistice Remembrance Service Tuesday, 11th November, 11:00am
Meet Father Christmas at Stansted House Saturday and Sunday, 22nd and 23rd November
Wreath Workshops in the Blue Drawing Room Friday, Saturday, Sunday 28th, 29th, 30th November
Evening Christmas Tour of Stansted House..... Thursday 4th, 11th, 17th December
A Christmas Carol - Immersive Theatre Friday, Saturday, 5th, 6th December
Christmas at Stansted House..... Sundays, 7th, 14th, 21st December
Christmas Calligraphy Workshop Friday, 12th December

COMMITTEE MEMBER CONTACT DETAILS

Chairman Nigel Smith - ngs.1957@hotmail.com
Secretary Anne Burton - anneburton99@gmail.com
Treasurer Sarah Hutchinson - hutchsj@yahoo.co.uk
Membership Secretary Paul Bennett - friendsofstanstedpark@outlook.com
Newsletter Editor Peter Dudman - peter.dudman1@virginmedia.com

For membership enquiries, please contact Paul Bennett. Membership cards will be issued to new members only. Membership Renewals: When renewing your membership, would you please consider setting up a Standing Order to save on volunteer time. Our Bank Details are: Sort Code 60-10-20 Account 61788627. Please give your membership number as a reference.

Consider keeping a photo of your membership card on your phone for ease of access.