



## Information For Applicants

Role: Historian (Freelance/Consultant)

Location: St Osyth, Tendring, Essex

Fee available: £5,000 in development phase; delivery phase (funding dependent)

Issue Dated: 17<sup>th</sup> June 2025

Deadline for Submissions: 4<sup>th</sup> July 2025

## Background

St Osyth Priory is an exceptional collection of heritage assets comprising 16 separate Grade I, II\* and II listed buildings set within a Grade II registered historic park and garden.

St Osyth's Abbey (originally and still commonly known as St Osyth Priory) was a house of Augustinian canons in the parish of St Osyth (then named Chich) in Essex, England in use from the 12th to 16th centuries. Prior to the Reformation, it was the third wealthiest abbey in the country. After falling into private ownership by the Darcy family following the reformation, the abbey was severely damaged in the English Civil War, and the house and 6,800-acre estate were owned privately throughout its history.

The house was requisitioned during the Second World War and then sold in 1948 to the Loyal and Ancient Order of Shepherds who founded a convalescent home here. Five parts of the priory are Grade I listed buildings. In 1954 Mr Somerset de Chair, a popular novelist and MP, purchased the property, allowing the convalescent home to remain in the main building for many years (closed in 1980), and converting the Gatehouse into a separate residence. De Chair developed the gardens and opened the property to the public. He also gradually sold off parts of the estate and allowed large-scale gravel extraction to disfigure much of the surrounding landscape. After his marriage in 1974 to Lady Juliet Wentworth Fitzwilliam, the Wentworth Woodhouse art collection, which she had inherited, was displayed here. On de Chair's death in 1995 the property was put up for sale by his widow, and it was eventually purchased by the present owners, the Sargeant family, in 1999.

The St Osyth Priory and Parish Trust was formed to support the restoration of the currently Heritage at Risk registered site, working alongside the Sargeant family to develop and deliver economically viable plans that will not only see the buildings repaired, but generate enough income to support long term maintenance and protect the Priory for current and future members of the surrounding community.

## The National Lottery Heritage Fund Project and Historian Brief

With public access restored through events and the education centre after 30 years of closure, The National Lottery Heritage Fund Development Phase funded Project will focus on the redevelopment of the Grade II\* listed Tithe Barn and Grade II listed Old Dairy into an attractive venue that can host weddings, celebrations, and community events alike.

As part of this project, The Trust are offering a consultancy for a historian (including archaeologists, heritage librarians, museologists, archivists, teachers, and heritage architects) to explore the history of St Osyth Priory and to engage our volunteers and community with the heritage of the site. Please note, that this position is funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund Development Phase Grant.

The history of the site is under-researched, but information is available from a number of sources, with the Priory specifically referenced in documents relating to the dissolution in the National Archive and British Library, St Osyth mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon name stones at Lindisfarne, and the seal of St Osyth held by Alnwick Castle. Further information is available via the collections of Colchester Castle, a [Historic England report](#), the works of local

historian Phyllis M Hendy, and previous studies by architects from City & Country. The Trust will support access to these works where possible.

The Historian will undertake research into the history of St Osyth Priory; this could include existing collections held by St Osyth Museum, a related historic event or topic or respond to an identified gap in the existing body of historical work. The current priority research areas for the Trust are:

1. The martyrdom of Anglo-Saxon St Osyth and the Vikings
2. The Augustinian Abbey
3. The dissolution and the Tudors, including connections to Princess Mary and Cromwell
4. St Osyth Witches and Witch Trials
5. Interpretation of architectural features of the Priory site, including stained glass windows and stonemasonry
6. Other relevant history as required

The following outcomes will be required:

1. Production of a written report in a format agreed with the Trust
2. Supply of support research material and bibliographies
3. Sharing of findings with the Project Team as required (Multi-Disciplinary Design Team, Activity Planner, Interpretation and Story telling Consultant)
4. Participation in the Trust's activities:
  - a. Community participation - Support the development and delivery of a community event and other learning/sharing opportunities - format to be agreed but this may be a workshop, activity, gathering of community histories/feedback, sharing of learning through a talk etc.
  - b. Supporting and guiding the work of volunteer interpretation researchers, including sharing knowledge of different history skills, such as how to conduct research, how to find source documents, how to use archives and maps
  - c. Making recommendations around further research for the Delivery Phase
  - d. Supporting the collection of information that will inform project evaluation
5. Partnership working with St Osyth Museum and others as required
6. Supply of images and material for Trust's social media and education programmes

The Trust's vision is *"To restore St Osyth Priory to its original place at the heart of its community as a champion of economic prosperity, education and wellbeing"* and trustees are particularly interested in activities that promote conservation and/or have a positive impact on the local area. The successful historian will provide opportunities for the community to both input into and access the final report; submissions for desktop-only studies will not be successful.

The final decision for the topic, timeframe, and schedule of payment will be negotiated between the Trust and the successful applicant. The Historian in Residence will retain copyright of the material generated during the residency and will acknowledge St Osyth Priory and Parish Trust as the original commissioner of the material. St Osyth Priory and Parish Trust will retain the right to publish material generated from the program in any format without further permission or remuneration. The results of the work will feed into the creation of the activity and interpretation plans.

## Timeline

Development Phase; July 2025 – August 2026

Delivery Phase; January 2027 – May 2029 (\*funding dependent)

\*If the project is successful with the delivery phase application the consultancy will continue, but there will be a break clause between the two phases.

## Location

The Historian will be expected to attend meetings both on and off site and online, as well as travel as required to access collections and archives to carry out research.

Although the successful applicant is not required to work on-site, there is an expectation that they will be available to support on-site activity at specific events to be agreed with the Trust.

## Budget

Development Phase - £5,000 including expenses

Delivery Phase – subject to funding

Expenses, including for travel, should be included in the fee proposal.

## Intellectual Property and Ownership

All intellectual property rights, including but not limited to copyrights, trademarks, patents, and any other protections arising from the information, documents, and creative works generated as part of the Historian in Residence commission, shall be owned by St Osyth Priory and Parish Trust. The Historian in Residence agrees that all materials created in the scope of their work shall be considered "work made for hire." However, the Historian retains the right to use these works for their portfolio and future projects, provided that such use does not conflict with the interests of St Osyth Priory and Parish Trust and is appropriately credited. Any significant revisions or adaptations of the work must receive prior written approval from St Osyth Priory and Parish Trust.

## Responses

Historians are required to submit an expression of interest to [tenders@stosythprioritytrust.org.uk](mailto:tenders@stosythprioritytrust.org.uk) by 5 pm on the 4<sup>th</sup> July 2025.

The Expression of Interest should be no more than 2 pages (not inclusive of attachments) and should include the following:

1. Topic chosen and reasoning, referring to:
  - a. How it enhances the existing body of documented history at St Osyth
  - b. How you will build in opportunities for community involvement/sharing
2. Methodology/approach to delivery of the brief
3. How you will present the research:
  - a. To the Trust
  - b. To the community
4. How you will ensure a high level of academic rigour

Attachments should include:

1. Current resume/CV (no more than 2 pages)
2. Examples of similar research work (no more than 2 pages - please summarise and provide short illustrations or examples of text where appropriate)

For more information or for an informal discussion about this brief please contact Chyanne Payne, Capital Project Coordinator, St Osyth Priory and Parish Trust – [tenders@stosythprioritytrust.org.uk](mailto:tenders@stosythprioritytrust.org.uk)