

North Staffordshire National Trust Association

Newsletter No. 114

Autumn 2019

www.northstaffsnt.org.uk



Enjoying a walk from Shugborough to Great Haywood

Arrangements for Trips

Coaches now depart promptly from **Brunswick Street** at the front of the Jubilee Baths. **The car park on School Street is now short stay.** The nearest long stay car park is the public car park next to the Borough Arms Hotel. We do not pick up members en route.

Please send a separate cheque, with the event name on the reverse, and a stamped addressed envelope for each event applied for, even if it is with the same organiser. People wishing to sit together should complete one form.

Non-members travelling as members' guests pay an extra £2 for Coach Outings and £1 for car trips. If circumstances dictate they have lower priority booking.

Please make cheques payable to "North Staffs National Trust Association". Cheques are normally not cleared until after an event. We will give notice if we need to do otherwise.

Refunds on cancellation are possible only if there is a waiting list. Please do not find your own substitute travellers: people on the waiting list have priority.

The Committee reserves the right to cancel any event that is not viable.

The personal accident insurance arranged by the Association through the Trust no longer has an age limit. Our public liability insurance also covers members at any age.

Whilst participating in an event please make sure that you carry the organiser's mobile phone number from the booking acceptance form in case you get lost. Please **DO NOT MAKE** alternative arrangements to get home without first telling the trip organiser.

This Newsletter is published by North Staffordshire National Trust Association to provide members with information on the forthcoming programme, reports on recent events, and other membership issues. The text and images are copyright and may not be reproduced without the owner's permission. Any views expressed by individual contributors are their own and not necessarily of the NSNTA or the NT. No liability will be accepted for errors or omissions.

We are always delighted to welcome new members – see further details on the inserts in the centre of this Newsletter.

The editor welcomes items of direct relevance to Association activities, and thanks all contributors, with apologies for failure to acknowledge any, particularly if sent by post.

Copy and correspondence for the next issue, due for publication in December, should be addressed to newsletter@northstaffsnt.org.uk (01782 791360) by the **15th October** at the absolute latest (but earlier if possible!)

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North Staffordshire National Trust Association

Newsletter No. 114 Autumn 2019 Programme

A Note From The Chair



For every edition of this august publication, and I admit the January one too, I fall back in a desperate search for originality on the human trait of looking for a pattern among events.

This time the only link I can see is the need for sensible shoes and what looks like nepotism. I hope in visiting another bell foundry we won't be bringing our previous jinx.

A short time after our tour of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry it announced its closure after over 400 years. There is now a hotly disputed planning application to turn it into a hotel and club with a swimming pool on the roof. Keep a look out for Loughborough Bell Foundry being in the news after our visit.

I am not sure if Penny Wheat, who is going to talk to us on silversmithing, is a relation of anyone we know, but she is a talented and busy person, and her talk should be highly polished.

As I close I note that our forthcoming brewery visit includes Staircase House. I try to avoid staircase wit, the bon mots you think of too late as you are on the way out.

Nonetheless, in this Newsletter I reckon I have two more chances to think of something sparkling before our new Chair takes over next May.

Best wishes

Ralph

Data Protection Policy

The North Staffordshire National Trust Association (NSNTA) is a non-profit voluntary organisation which endeavours to comply with the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998, and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of May 2018.

Personal data collected by us on membership forms, renewal forms and event booking forms will be limited to: names, addresses, email addresses and telephone numbers. It will only be used for: administration of membership, communication of information and organisation of events within and related to the NSNTA.

Personal data will not be shared with the National Trust or any third party, or to other members.

Membership lists are destroyed when 18 months old. Lists relating to specific events are destroyed when the event is complete.

Contact the Membership Secretary if you wish to view/amend/delete any of your personal data.

By providing personal data on our membership forms and event booking forms, you are consenting to this, our Data Protection Policy, and to our stated use of your personal data.

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In order to comply with the terms of GDPR and to improve security and privacy the following policies are being adopted with particular reference to the publishing of details of members organising events. Full leaders' postal addresses will only appear on the booking forms and not in the main text of the magazine, which will just carry email addresses and telephone numbers. The booking forms are included in Newsletters distributed to bona-fide members of NSNTA but will not be contained in copies of the Newsletter posted on the website. Access to back copies of the Newsletter on the website which contain leaders' addresses will be restricted by password, available to members on request.

Attendees of NSNTA events are advised that they may be included in group photographs for publication in the Newsletter or on the website, but they will not be named without their specific permission. If anyone does not want to appear in such photographs, please let the organiser or the editor know.

## *Forthcoming Events*

*All talks commence at 7:30 p.m. at the North Staffordshire Conference Centre (the Medical Institute), Hartshill Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 7NY unless otherwise stated.*

From time to time it becomes necessary to change details of an event or to announce updates to booking arrangements, availability etc. or to advise members of other matters that have arisen. To cover this, please check the **STOP PRESS** feature on the website to be kept up to date.

### **Sunday 1st - Thursday 5th September 2019: Holiday in Constable Country and Rural Suffolk.**

This is now fully booked with a full waiting list.

### **Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> September: Coach Trip: Loughborough Bell Foundry and the Great Central Heritage Railway**

The coach will leave Newcastle at 8.00am for the **John Taylor Bell Foundry and Museum** where we will learn about the art of English Bellfounding over the last 600 years. The tour starts at 10.00am and takes approx. 1½ hrs. The tour involves quite a lot of standing and walking over uneven ground, so strong (not fabric) fully enclosed shoes are essential. It can be cold and dusty in the Foundry so warm dark coloured clothing is advised.

PERSONS NOT WEARING APPROPRIATE FOOTWEAR WILL BE REFUSED ENTRY TO THE FOUNDRY. (This is an HSE and Insurance Requirement.)

This is the last Bell foundry in the country now that the Whitechapel foundry has closed. It is still family owned with a fascinating history. It continues a line of Bell Founding which has existed since the middle of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. From 1784 the business was operated by members of the Taylor family and in 1839 it moved to its present position in Loughborough and is now proud to operate the largest bell foundry in the world. Many of the worlds most experienced “change ringers” regard Taylors bells as the finest instruments of their kind. Beautiful sounding bells hung in immensely strong bell frames on perfectly balanced fittings. This should be a fascinating experience to see the formers where church bells have been cast over the centuries and watch how they are tuned.

After the visit we travel to the THREE NUNS pub for lunch (at own cost). There is a varied menu and to help the pub to cope efficiently with 35 people with maximum choice



we will need to pre book. The confirmations and menus will be sent out when the Autumn menus are available. Please indicate any dietary requests.



We shall then take the coach to the Loughborough Central Station for 2.45pm for a 1½ hr. round trip on the Great Central Heritage Railway. We are hoping this will be their Steam Engine but they cannot guarantee this. Drinks and snacks will be available.

We leave at 4.30 to return to Newcastle for approx. 6.00pm.

There are still a few places left. Check with the organiser.

Cost: £38.00 (members): Numbers restricted to 35. Closing date August 15<sup>th</sup>.

Booking form, SAE and cheque made out to North Staffs NT Assoc. to Michael Lycett - Tel: 01782 502919. Email: lycettmichael@hotmail.com

### **Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> September: Talk: Rick Marshall on Antarctica**

Rick was a physics lecturer for 20 years and a school master for 12. His talk is derived from first-hand experience and/or research interests. Antarctica is now easily accessible to tourists. Why do those that visit it find it such a life changing experience?

### **Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> October: Coach Trip: Robinson's Brewery & Staircase House, Stockport**

An opportunity to tour both **Robinson's** working, traditional (yet advanced and sophisticated) tower brewery – sampling the beers with your luncheon – and **Staircase House**, a Grade II\* listed 15<sup>th</sup> century mediaeval townhouse.

Our coach will depart from Brunswick Street in Newcastle at 9.00am and transport us to the heart of Stockport where Robinson's, (which owns around 260 tenanted and managed pubs, inns and hotels across the North West), have been "brewing perfection" for 180 years, since 1838. We shall have tea/coffee and divide into groups for our guided tour of the brewery. **The circuit includes brewery smells and, although there is no lift available, the 54 steps, usually of 13 steps to a staircase, can be taken slowly and the flights of stairs do not come all at once.**



**UNICORN BEER**



**JACOBAN STAIRCASE**

'Robinsons', a proud family of independent brewers, is one of the oldest and most respected names in British brewing history, with a worldwide reputation for real ale. The gift shop provides an opportunity to stock-up on your tipples of choice; perhaps "Old Tom", "Unicorn", "Dizzy Blonde", "Wizard" or "Iron Maiden Trooper". (You can leave any purchases with Robinsons's receptionist to collect before departing for home, to save having to carry them during the afternoon). Hopefully we will have the chance to meet some gentle giants, Bobek and Mojo (the shire horses), who have served Robinsons's Brewery over the years. A spread of sandwiches & chips and Robinsons's beers (or soft drink/tea/coffee, if preferred) will be provided for our private luncheon in the Old Tom room.

After lunching we take a short 5 minute walk, for fresh air to clear heads, along to the market place and Stockport's oldest townhouse, 'Staircase House', where we are offered a unique glimpse into the life of mediaeval and renaissance Stockport.

Individual audio guides will recount the full history of the house, including relating how the house was brought back to life after a devastating fire. By exploring the three floors of this residence we shall be taken on a journey through time.

**There are some uneven floor surfaces, but a slightly different route around is available for those with mobility issues, (and there is a lift to all floors). Anyone partially sighted, or with hearing difficulties, can also be accommodated.**

The Stockport Museum, which is free of charge to enter, is accessed from Staircase House and time should allow perusal here also. If you fancy an

indulgent treat before setting-off for home, *Blackshaw's Café* is immediately next-door to the Museum. Alternatively, just across the road, St. Mary's church welcomes visitors and sports a *Café in the Nave*.

We aim to depart from Stockport at 4.30pm returning to Newcastle before 6.00pm.

**Cost:** £35.50 (£37.50 to non-members) to include two tours, tea/coffee on arrival, sandwich luncheon including chips and a drink, coach, driver's gratuity and NT donation.

Please apply **by 1<sup>st</sup> September** to B. Montgomery, tel: 07941 323107, email: b.montgomery19@btinternet.com.

### **Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> October: Walk: Lakes and woods of Keele campus.**

This walk explores the eight lakes of Keele University campus. Three are natural, and five more were created by the Sneyd family of Keele Hall during the nineteenth century. It takes in those parts of the campus that were not covered by our walk in March this year.

We will meet at 10 am at the Dick Turpin pub on Gallowstree Lane, Newcastle ST5 2QS.

A short walk takes us to "The Butts", a small wood on the hill behind the houses, and a permissive path from there gets us to Keele itself. We pass through more woods to reach our first lake (number 5 I think). Lake 6 is overgrown and hard to find, but 7 and 8 are delightful havens for wildlife. I would say tranquil but the noise from the motorway does intrude – you can't have everything! A small hill comes next, thoughtfully increased in height by the aforementioned Sneyds to improve both their views and our fitness levels, then we are heading back towards the hall and lakes 4 to 1 in that order. Keep a look-out all the way for specimen trees, flora and fauna, especially a wide range of water birds.

Our route to the pub takes us by the observatory, the old farm buildings, and modern architecture too. We will be back at the Dick Turpin in time for lunch at 1pm.

It's about 5½ miles in total, a couple of moderate hills to climb but no stiles to worry about, and hardly any road traffic.





Suggested donation for the walk is £3.00 for members, £3.50 for guests.

Please book your place with Richard Adams, by email, or by post with an SAE. rjadams@doctors.org.uk.

### **Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October: Talk: Rachel Thomas on NT properties in Cheshire**

Rachel Thomas, General Manager, NT – Cheshire & Wirral portfolio, oversees the successful delivery of property operations within the Cheshire & Wirral portfolio, which comprises Little Moreton Hall, Hare Hill Garden, and 16 countryside properties across Cheshire including Alderley Edge, Thurstaston Common, Bickerton Hill, and Bosley Cloud. The role is incredibly rewarding and



diverse, which sets the direction for the properties in the portfolio and leads the delivery of the business plan. She deals with all aspects of conservation, finance, operations, and the 'visitor experience', supported by a variety of committed and passionate staff, volunteers, and consultants. She's held this role for over two years, and prior to that worked for the NT at Quarry Bank for almost six years.

### **Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> November: Car outing: Brynkinalt Hall, Historic Private House Nr. Wrexham**

It will be worth getting up early to enjoy the best of the day at this Grade 2 star house built in 1612. You will be home before it is dark and in time for the evening talk. The House is the private home of the Trevor's. They have held sway in these parts since at least 942 when a Trevor, King of Gloucester, married the daughter of The King of Wales: the extended family includes The Duke of Wellington and The Prince of Wales.

The original Jacobean panelled Hall survives and the early 19th century enhancements were very successful, the impressive interiors featured prominently in David Brown's "My Favourite Rooms" talk for us a while ago.

The West Garden with formal beds and herbaceous borders has recently been restored and plans are in hand for the double walled Kitchen Garden.

The guided tour covers the formal rooms, but regrettably, there is no disabled access upstairs or specially adapted cloakroom downstairs. The Trevor's dogs are very possessive of their home, so only necessary guide dogs please!



Location LL14 5NS near Chirk. Meet at 10 a.m. for 10.30 a.m. tour, which will last approximately 2 hours.

Cost £20 (non-members £22) which includes lavish refreshments on arrival and guided tour. Maximum number 40. Please consider car-sharing.

Apply to Ralph White enclosing cheque and SAE. Full directions and suggestions for places for lunch, at own expense, will be included with the booking confirmation.

### **Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> November: Talk Penny Wheat, My Life and Work as a Silversmith**

Penny was a lecturer in silversmithing at Stafford College for 36 years. She has been public speaker for around one year and goes all over West Midlands with her four talks.

She has been involved in prison work, including visits to Death Row, USA since 1984 (book about this published by Monarch (Lion Hudson) in 2005, available on Amazon). She is a keen poet - some work published, a keen singer - member of 2 choirs, a keen gardener, and a keen cricket lover (had own column in local paper for 3 years). She is involved in church work and loves quizzes.

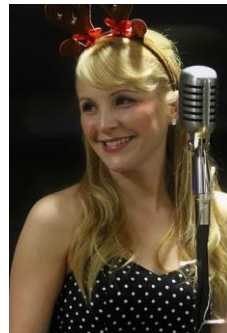
## Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> December: Annual Christmas Meal @Potbank

Following the successful meal last year, we will return once again to the Spode site for our festive Christmas dinner. We will have exclusive use of both the Meadows and Potters event spaces as well as the bar. The entertainment this year will be in the form of a singer, Holly Reynolds who will perform once dinner is over.

Our Christmas dinner, to include a welcome aperitif and tea/coffee after the meal, will cost £30 per person and cheques will be cashed on 18<sup>th</sup> November as we have to pay in advance.

For tickets please apply to Cynthia Dumbelton including the booking form with your menu choices, a cheque and a stamped addressed envelope. Closing date: 11<sup>th</sup> November.

Enquiries: tel. 01782 641765; email: dumbeltoncynthia@gmail.com



### **Starter Platter**

Chicken Liver Pâté, Fig & Red Chutney  
Smoked Salmon Roulade  
Little Cheddar and Leek Tartlets (v)  
Breaded Halloumi with Cranberry Relish (v)  
Farmhouse Breads

### **Mains**

Roast Turkey, Apricot and Thyme Stuffing, Roasties,  
Chipolata Wrapped in Streaky Bacon, Roasted  
Carrots & Parsnips, Red Wine Jus, Cranberry Relish

Honey Roast Gammon on Champ Potato, Roasted  
Carrots & Parsnips, Savoy Cabbage, Light Grain  
Mustard Sauce

Chestnut Mushroom Wellington with Roasties, Root  
Vegetables, Tarragon Cream Sauce (v)

### **To Finish**

Warm Chocolate Fudge Brownie, Xmas Pudding Ice  
Cream and Ginger Snap Crumb  
OR

Stilton and Mature Cheddar with Spiced Apple  
Chutney, Celery, Walnuts and Biscuits

## *Advance Booking*

*The following event from our future programme needs to be booked before, or soon after, the next Newsletter is published:*

### **Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> -Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2020: Coach trip: Association Scottish Holiday**

We are excited to tell you that a holiday has been arranged for next year, this time to Scotland. It will be a 4 night/5 day break staying at the 4 star New Lanark Mill Hotel, located in the heart of a World Heritage Site, a beautifully restored 18<sup>th</sup>-century cotton mill village. Together with Regent Travel, we have planned a full holiday visiting both Glasgow and Edinburgh and including many National Trust properties along the way. Cost: £522 pp. Please see the separate flyer and booking form from Regent Travel who will be responsible for organising this holiday. Early applications are recommended to ensure you have a place reserved on this holiday.

## *Capriccio Conservation*

Following Gemma Robert's talk on the conservation work at Shugborough, we have been advised they will have paintings conservators on site working within the space on the following dates: 2<sup>nd</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> September, 23<sup>rd</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> September, 7<sup>th</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> October and 9<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> December.

In addition they will have conservators working on the frames of the paintings on the following dates: 12<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> August, 19<sup>th</sup> -23<sup>rd</sup> August, 14<sup>th</sup> -18<sup>th</sup> October.

This of course will be subject to change as the project progresses so if you are thinking of visiting especially for this it is worth giving them a call beforehand to check to save disappointment, and if we are advised of any changes they will be posted on the website.

A number of recent incidents prompted a review of our **emergency** procedures and it was considered a shortcoming that organisers did not hold emergency contact details for members on trips should a situation arise. You are therefore invited, particularly if travelling without a companion, to provide the name and number of someone who can be contacted in emergency, along with any critical medical conditions that might be relevant, or whether (and where) you carry ICE details. We also request that you provide your own mobile number so that you can be contacted should you fail to appear at a rendezvous.

## *New Members*

We have pleasure in announcing and welcoming the following new members: Geoff Bickerton, Pauline Bamford, George & Hilary Greensides, Lawrence & Valerie Austin, Terence Jenks, Mary Camm and John Yardley. This takes our membership to 355.

**NT Membership Discount** A reminder that a discount on the general National Trust membership subscription is available to eligible members – see Newsletter 110 or their website for more details.

## *Reviews of Recent Events*

### **Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> March: Coach Trip: Manchester: Elizabeth Gaskell House, Pankhurst Centre & Whitworth Art Gallery**

We had a full day in Manchester, divided largely into small groups because of the size of the places we were visiting.



My group took a short walk from Elizabeth Gaskell's house to The Pankhurst Centre, where Emmeline and her daughters lived for some years before the First World War. The house is Grade-2 listed and is surrounded by the hospital site – it has narrowly escaped being made into an NHS car-park!

'The Queen is most anxious to enlist every one who can speak or write to join in checking this mad, wicked folly of "Woman's Rights", with all its attendant horrors, on which her poor feeble sex is bent, forgetting every sense of womanly feeling and propriety... It is a subject which makes the Queen so furious that she cannot contain herself. God created men and women different - then let them remain each in their own position.'

"Women's suffrage is a more dangerous leap in the dark than it was in the 1860s because of the vast growth of the Empire, the immense increase of England's imperial responsibilities, and therefore with the increased complexity and risk of the problems which lie before our statesmen - constitutional, legal, financial, military, international problems - problems of men, only to be solved by the labour and special knowledge of men, and where the men who bear the burden ought to be left unhampered by the political inexperience of women."

After our visit we walked back to the house where Elizabeth Gaskell lived with her husband and children, and where she wrote most of her books. We had already, on our first arrival, been up to the servants' room, to see the letter which had come to light in the stables only a few years ago. Now we had sandwiches and cakes (delicious), before being given a tour of the rest of the house.





The Gaskells paid £150 a year rent for this very handsome house, at a time when her husband's salary as a Unitarian minister was only £300 – but their additional private income was sufficient to make this rent manageable. The whole house was attractively furnished, partly with their things, partly with contemporary

items reflecting what they are known to have had. We were shown round by a well-informed guide, who was able to talk about various aspects of the Gaskells' life.

The last part of the day was a visit to the Whitworth Art Gallery, where we were able to wander around the various galleries and through the park outside, till it was time to leave for home. Many thanks to Jane and Richard for organizing the day.



*Christopher Wain*

### **Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> April: Talk: Hazel Griffiths, Cruise ship speaker – 'Motion of the Ocean'**

Hazel gave a most interesting talk on her life as a speaker on cruise ships. She has had extensive experience and her knowledge of many places in the world held her audience captive for an hour. We saw superb photos of Rome, Venice, Lisbon and detailed shots of Ephesus and Kusadasi in Turkey. Her favourite tour was Greenland and her description of the peace and tranquillity of that country struck a chord with many of us. She gave advice on the type of ships detailing their advantages and disadvantages.

She spoke with passion, clarity, enthusiasm and was honest in her experiences. It was a thoroughly professional talk and it is not surprising that she is in such demand both on the ships and on land as a speaker.

*David Morgan*

### **Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> April: Car Trip: Ford Hall Farm, Market Drayton & lunch**

A bright spring day was the ideal time to visit this 140-acre farm and hear Charlotte Hollins give a very lively and personal account of how her father, Arthur, pioneered making the land into an organic pasture farm with a business selling dairy products. However, by the time he died, the landlord wished to sell



the farm, and his children, Charlotte and Ben, were faced with finding £800,000 to purchase it. Both newly graduated and with no money, they were determined not to lose their home, so invited friends and people from the local community to come and help them re-establish the business and raise the money.

With youthful enthusiasm and vigour – and a naivety that blinded them to the enormity of the task – they began selling produce direct to the public and arranging group events and weekends for working parties. Then in 2005 they started selling £50 shares in the farm and thanks to some good publicity from the national press and TV the scheme eventually brought in the necessary amount and the deal was signed at the very last minute. So the farm is now owned by thousands of people, some from as far away as Canada and Japan. We felt like cheering at the end of the talk!

Most people then took a short walk around parts of the farm, admiring the new eco-friendly Bunk House in course of construction. Finally came the promised ‘delicious ploughman’s lunch’ which splendidly lived up to its billing. Many thanks to Rose Wheat for organising such an unusual visit – and arranging the weather!

*Anne Anderton*

## **Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> May: Car outing: Water and Wheels Museum, Stone**

Tucked away in the unlikely location of the Whitebridge Industrial Estate in Stone, we located the Water and Wheels Museum on the banks of the Trent and Mersey Canal. Here we discovered the other “Staffordshire Hoard” – an extraordinary and eclectic collection of canal and railway memorabilia, plus other miscellaneous items, all housed in a newly created museum by twins Martin and Roger Fuller.

Although not yet open to the public, we were greeted by the brothers and enjoyed an introductory talk on the history of their collection. Even though they have since retired from boat building, the brothers have continued their lifetime passion and hobby of scouring the UK for all manner of fascinating articles.





Anything and everything they find to be of interest is stored or displayed on their premises and not everything is related to canals.

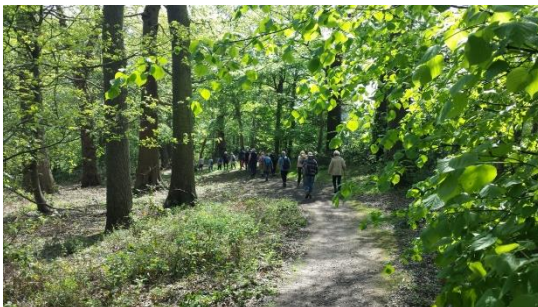
On display are railway and canal nameplates, ironwork from old narrowboats, tools, clocks and even the aft-section of a very old horse-drawn canal boat. Plus, miscellaneous items that have been thrown in or lost overboard and have subsequently been dredged up from the bottom of the canals, including jewellery, tools and watches.

Who would have thought that so many obsolete and discarded items of canal life could be so interesting, therefore, our thanks to Cynthia and David for arranging this fascinating visit.

*Ann Winter*

### **Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May: Walk: Great Haywood to Shugborough**

25 of us set out from the excellent car park, belonging to the Canal Side Farm Shop and Café at Great Haywood, along the Trent and Mersey canal towpath and before long we were crossing the Essex Bridge. This is a Grade 1 listed Packhorse Bridge over the River Trent, built in the late 16<sup>th</sup> Century by the Earl of Essex who was a favourite of Queen Elizabeth 1<sup>st</sup>. It is the longest remaining packhorse bridge in England. Soon we were crossing the parkland of Shugborough estate in the company of a herd of longhorn cattle, a rare breed which is a lovely sight these days.



Our walk was taken at a leisurely pace and it soon became evident that our "rambler leaders " might struggle to keep the front runners and the stragglers in sight, one of the tricks involved in leading a N.T. walk



We saw many canal boats of all shapes and size, varying from day trippers to full blown floating residences (see how the other half lives).

We crossed the river Trent again over the cobbled Weetman's Bridge built in 1888 by public subscription, the largest donor being Joseph Weetman, and hardly changed in 100 years.

A short stretch of road took us back to the canal, to return to the Canalside Café where we enjoyed a first class varied menu for lunch and saw a full sized life like map of the area showing a selection of walks in the immediate vicinity. Many thanks to Joan and David for a lovely morning out, sunshine included.

*Richard Mayer*

## **Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> May 7:00 p.m.: AGM: Speaker: Gemma Roberts on Conservation**

North Staffordshire National Trust Association: Minutes of the 39<sup>th</sup> AGM at the North Staffs Conference Centre, 21<sup>st</sup> May 2019 at 7.00 p.m.

Richard Adams welcomed members to the AGM and recorded 7 apologies from members.

**Chairman's remarks:** Ralph White reported that we had had a very successful year with many events. He thanked Jane Mayer for co-ordinating our events programme so well for the last four years, and he thanked John Spriggs for all his work on the newsletter and on our website, Ralph encouraged members to look at the website, especially the new "stop press" area where updates and new information can now be found. He asked members to ensure that they now give contact details of a friend or family member to trip organisers, for use in emergency.

**The Minutes of the 38<sup>th</sup> AGM:** No questions were asked. Richard asked that the minutes should be accepted - all present agreed.

**Secretary's report:** Membership is currently 362. We have had a busy year, with a total of 24 events to enjoy, including 4 coach outings, 7 car trips, 3 walks, 8 talks, the Christmas dinner, and our holiday in London. Thanks to all who have organised events, and to members for attending.

**Treasurer's report:** Huw Davies thanked Madeleine Hopley, the previous treasurer, for an easy transition and all the help she has given him. He presented the accounts for 2018-19, copies of which had been distributed.

Huw noted that our reserves are £7,000, in line with last year. This level is desirable to allow for unexpected costs, especially should an urgent appeal for funds be made by one of our local properties.

We made smaller donations to the National Trust than last year, and costs are rising, in particular hire of the hall for talks and postage costs. This year's holiday is expected to produce a surplus of around £1,000, less than before as we are using a travel company rather than organising it all ourselves.

Huw thanked James Scott of Hardings Accountants for examining the accounts for us.

There were no questions, and the meeting accepted the accounts.

**Subscription level for next year:** Richard reported that subscriptions were last increased four years ago. Committee had discussed the level of subscription required to maintain donations, and propose an increase to £12 per year for individual members, and £8 for further members at the same address. The meeting agreed to this, to take effect from January 2020.

**Election of Officers and Committee:** In accordance with the constitution, committee members who have served for 5 years or more must seek approval to stand for re-election; there were eight who wished to stand again – Richard Adams, Roger Cartlidge, Sue Corlett, Cynthia Dumbelton, Sue Till, Rose Wheat, Ralph White and Bob Winter. The meeting agreed that these could stand. Nominations from the room were sought but none were made. Five further committee members stood for re-election: Huw Davies, Marion Lycett, Jane Mayer, David Morgan and John Spriggs. All the above were elected or re-elected unanimously.

**AOB:** Richard Mayer proposed a vote of thanks to John for the newsletters and website. Agreed.

Marion Lycett was introduced to the meeting as our new programme co-ordinator.

Ralph thanked the meeting for re-electing him as our chairman. However, he gave advance notice that he will not be seeking re-election at next year's AGM. Members are invited to consider if they are the one to take on this rewarding role.

The meeting closed at 7.26pm, and was followed by:.

### **Gemma Roberts talk on Shugborough conservation**

This entertaining and informative talk was specially compiled for us by Gemma Roberts, House and Collection Manager, Shugborough, the person bearing the responsibility for looking after the works of art. It centred on the four enormous early 18<sup>th</sup> century architectural fantasies in The Dining Room. These are currently being conserved in full public view for the rest of the year. In photographs and a

video we saw how the fragile canvases were removed from the frames to be worked on. The work also revealed details of their history.

It was discovered how they had been cut down to fit and added to if need be. One in particular had suffered from regular flooding because water regularly found its way down the inside of an outside wall.

Gemma showed us other examples of conservation at Shugborough. I was particularly impressed by the huge scaffolded gantry on the Triumphal Arch so the public could have a close up view of conservation in action.

Thank you Gemma for giving us such a fascinating glimpse of the impressive work, not often seen, which is preserving Shugborough's treasures for future generations,

*Ralph*

### **Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> May Coach Trip: British Ironwork Centre and Chirk Castle<sup>NT</sup>**



On a glorious May Day we visited the British Ironworks Centre. After coffee we strolled round the extensive grounds where we went on safari to see an amazing menagerie of metal animals. Not only were there jungle animals including a giant gorilla made out of spoons but a dragon sitting on a car,

prehistoric creatures, and a police dog made out of guns and knives. Each animal is accompanied by an educational panel. The famous knife angel was on tour.

There is such a wonderful eccentricity about the place. The café is surrounded by craft stalls selling a variety of goods including silver jewellery, dolls and a wide variety of metalwork. We had a delicious lunch which was well organised and we were given an

ice cream on the coach as we left for - **Chirk Castle.**





The first glimpse of this impressive Castle was quite magical and the choice of whether to explore the gardens or the house first on such a beautiful day was very difficult. The extensive gardens, covering 5.5 acres, are a real delight, particularly the incredible yew topiary hedge which takes 6 weeks to sculpture.

The maze of beautiful rooms in the house with their fascinating history were brought to life by the knowledgeable NT stewards. Chirk Castle is remarkable for the simple fact that it has been lived in continuously ever since it was built over 700 years



ago and each generation has made their individual mark with input from contemporary designers which include Pugin in the 19th century. Impossible to do justice to the history and delights of

Chirk. You will have to explore for yourself but my lasting impression was a real feel for the past medieval grandeur of a castle coupled with the warmth of a living home.

Thank you to our organiser John Huson for a great day.



*Marion Lycett & Jane Mayer*

## Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> June: Coach Trip: DH Lawrence Museum & Newstead Abbey, Notts

In the morning we visited the D H LAWRENCE museum, the childhood home dedicated to the writer, located in the ex-mining town of Eastwood near to Nottingham. Lawrence was born here in 1885, the fourth of five children. The area is surrounded by beautiful countryside which influenced Lawrence's life and books.

The museum is very well presented and the room settings were displayed as it would have looked when Lawrence lived there. The rooms included front parlour, kitchen, front and back bedroom with attic. Outside you step into a communal yard with washhouse. The rooms were quite small and the stairs were very steep and narrow. Walking around the house it was hard to believe that such a large family would have lived in such a small house. The museum shop was well stocked with lots of interesting books relating to Lawrence as well as a good choice of his novels and the overall visit to the museum was very atmospheric and informative.

Thank you to Jane Mayer for arranging this interesting experience.

*Deb Johnston*

The sun made a brief appearance and the prospect of exploring the beautiful gardens at Newstead Abbey was presented; sadly the rain resumed but fortunately the delights of the Abbey made up for the weather.



To the eerie cries of peacocks, we explored the building with the help of our excellent guides. Its evolution from Medieval priory to the ancestral home of Lord Byron, one of our most Romantic and notorious poets, and its further transformation into the residence of a wealthy Victorian family, was a fascinating journey through history. It is interesting to speculate what the monks would have thought of the conversion of their austere refectory into a gymnasium for the libidinous poet. The spirit of the Blackfriars intermingled with the hedonistic parties of Byron's set and the memorabilia

of Ada Lovelace, his only legitimate daughter, a pioneer in computer studies.

Many thanks to Shirley for organising such an enthralling trip.

*Rose Wheat*

## Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> June: Car outing: The Gardens of Eccleshall

The 30 or so members who arrived in Eccleshall for the exclusive tour of five private gardens had umbrellas and shower proofs at the ready.

It was very pleasant to be handed a glass of wine at the first garden – the home of NT Association members Pauline and Roger Savage, and to stroll into the courtyard where attention was



immediately drawn to the water fountain. The extent of the garden was revealed after ascending the steps to the lovely lawn and borders of beautiful plants and plant groupings. The pinkish/white peonies were particularly captivating as were the roses and clematis.



With a plan of the route in hand, we made our way to gardens 2, 3 and 4 – The Mercer's House, Church Lodge and Holly House/Malt House, all of which slope down to the River Sow, the Town Meadow and offered views of the castle and Holy Trinity Church.

The rain was such that Shakespeare's words in 'The Merchant of Venice' concerning the 'quality of mercy' came to mind: *"It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven - Upon the earth beneath."*



The plants seemed to respond to the rain standing tall in the case of perennials, their colours vibrant in the early evening light. The vegetable beds and salad crops offered different forms and textures pleasing to the eye.

Also eye-catching were the salmon coloured geraniums in grey containers attached high up on a wall next to a

spreading Sambucus in full flower, climbing roses, topiary including a sheep, detailed information about bees, winding paths, some under arches, different water features which were an intriguing sight even in the rain and a shed, the front of which was cleverly disguised by foliage and a bird fashioned from willow.



The tour ended at Ashcroft on the Stafford Road, the home of Gill and Peter Bertram.

The varying shades of green of the trees and shrubs were quite dramatic. One area showed what can be grown in deep shade. Amusement was caused by a notice attached to a garden fork, pointing out a line of topiary sheep. That was the best position from which to view them. It was delightful to come across the various carvings and features, some more concealed than others.

This absorbing evening was rounded off with delicious cake and tea or coffee. Everyone agreed that it had been most enjoyable.

Many thanks to Cynthia Dumbelton for making the arrangements.

*Frances Paget*

### **Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> June: Car trip: Weston Park House & Gardens, Shropshire**



Weston Park was the ancestral home of the Earls of Bradford, the original part of the house dates from 1671. It has been extended and altered over the centuries and since 1986 it has belonged to the Weston Park Foundation. The visitors' entrance is through the 1767 Granary with a restaurant and snacks. The art gallery upstairs has changing monthly exhibitions.

We saw the excellent collection of antiques: bronzes, chandeliers, china, clocks, beautiful furniture and huge tapestries. The pictures, with many more in store, are carefully looked after in an annual rotating programme of cleaning and re-hanging. My favourite was a painting by Sir Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641) of Sir Thomas Hanmer (1612-1678) MP, horticulturalist and author of *The Garden Book* in 1659. He introduced agate striped tulips to Britain.

Our guide, Robert Haynes, stressed that it is a working house, so the carpets are modern copies of 1820's patterns and colours. In the afternoon, he took my half of the group downstairs to see the parts used by staff and upstairs to see the guest rooms. Tony Blair held a G8 summit meeting there, the bedrooms have fabulous views over the gardens and surrounding countryside. Capability Brown redesigned the park with the usual lake, meadows and trees. Head gardener Martin Gee talked to us in 2018.

If you missed this trip, there are regular summer afternoon tours but these will not include all we saw on Sue Corlett's interesting visits.

*Anthea Bond*

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Photographic Archives

A reminder that Kay Williams, would be grateful for some photos/leaflets from visits when she is not there herself; prints or digital images are equally acceptable. See inside the back cover for Kay's contact details.

The editor acknowledges and thanks contributors of photographs included in this issue, and also for any photos sent but not used. Any photographs submitted will also be passed on to Kay for possible use in the archives, and may be used on the NSNTA website for record or publicity purposes. Copyright (which must be owned or obtained in writing by the submitter) is acknowledged for all images even if not stated in the magazine. Please contact the editor if more details of any item are required. *We still haven't managed to start posting more photos on the website but hopefully it may happen soon!*

Could you be our next Chairperson?

As Ralph announced at the AGM, and confirms in his Note from the Chair, he is relinquishing this post next May, and it is not too early to seek nominations for his successor. If you would like to find out more about what is involved, or could suggest someone eminently suitable, please contact him or any member of the committee.

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Summary of Programme August to December 2019

September	
Sun 1 st – Thu 5 th	Coach Holiday: Constable Country and Rural Suffolk
Wednesday 11 th	Coach Trip: Loughborough Bell Foundry and Heritage Railway
Tuesday 24 th	Talk: Rick Marshall - Antarctica
October	
Tuesday 8 th	Coach Trip: Robinson's Brewery & Staircase House, Stockport
Sunday 13 th	Walk: Keele Area and Lunch
Tuesday 22 nd	Talk: Rachel Thomas - NT properties in Cheshire
November	
Tuesday 19 th	Car Outing: Historic Private House – Brynkinalt Hall, Nr Wrexham.
Tuesday 19 th	Talk: Penny Wheat, My Life and Work as a Silversmith
December	
Wednesday 4 th	Annual Christmas Meal @Potbank
Dates for your Diary 2020	
January 21 st	Talk: Martin Tideswell on The changing face of Journalism
February 25 th	Talk: Jean Finney - The origin of Nursery Rhymes
March 17 th	Talk: David Skillen - A General Introduction to the American Civil War
June 22 nd -26 th	Coach trip: Association Scottish Holiday

***This Newsletter (and previous editions) is available on the website.
If required additional copies of booking forms can be printed
using 'Booklet' printing for multiple pages.***