

North Staffordshire National Trust Association

Newsletter No. 115
Winter-Spring 2020
www.northstaffsnt.org.uk



The Mill Hotel, Sudbury

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 – please contact the Membership Secretary (details inside back cover) or download the on-line form to apply.

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 April, should be addressed to newsletter@northstaffsnt.org.uk (01782 791360) by the **15th March** at the absolute latest (but earlier if possible!)

Printed by Colourimage Printers, High Wycombe (01494 52999) colourimage@aol.com

North Staffordshire National Trust Association Newsletter No. 115 Winter-Spring 2020 Programme

A Note From The Chair - "A Word In Your Shell-like".



Happy New Year. I hope the future is kind to you and yours. So many things may have changed, but not necessarily improved, by the time you read this, I hope this programme of varied events will come as a welcome distraction and produce happy memories in time to come.

2020 is a year of anniversaries. The Trust is 125 years old and our Association forty. Please let us know if you are inclined to celebrate. In the past the NSNTA has marked special birthdays by either baking a cake, or deciding not to bother! There are endless ways to have a party by combining other anniversaries this year. Marking a hundred years since the start of Prohibition and eighty years

since the start of Food Rationing should not upset The Treasurer.

I will conclude with cheery thoughts of Winter delights and thoughts of Spring.

Voltaire said that all that was necessary, when things were really depressing, was to go and cultivate the garden. (Swedish teenagers know he had a bigger project in mind). However you could start by cultivating the habit of garden visiting even in Winter. At this season some flowers and shrubs counter hardship with more intense colour and perfume.

Why wait for Spring? Go and see the superb Winter Garden just down the road at Dunham Massey.

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.



## The North Staffordshire National Trust Association 40th anniversary, 2020



In 2020 the North Staffs National Trust Association will be celebrating 40 years and the National Trust will have its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The National Trust has 5.6 million members, 9000 staff, 65,000 volunteers and 500 historical sites, the first meeting with Octavia Hill was on 12<sup>th</sup> January 1895.

Here in North Staffordshire, the first meeting of the Association was on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1980 at the Queen's Theatre in Burslem. The first coach trip was to Chirk and Erdigg. All NSNTA members must also be members of the NT. We contribute donations to their fundraising projects in this area e.g. the restoration of the ceiling at Biddulph Grange described in a recent Newsletter.

Now we have almost 400 members, with a committee and a planning group who meet regularly to organise events. Last year there were 8 talks in the Conference Centre in Hartshill Road, formerly known as the North Staffs Medical Institute, and 14 outings. The coach holiday in 2018 to London, organised by Cynthia Dumbelton, was followed this year by a trip to Suffolk, run by Regent Travel. The Christmas meal remains the highlight of the winter events. Any member is welcome to organise an event such as a bus trip or a car outing, speak first to a committee member about your idea.

Many members of all ages have taken photographs on these outings. At the end of 2020 we shall have a display of photographs taken at the events and holidays during the last 40 years. We want **your** contributions so please start **now** to look for those favourite photos which remind you of interesting places and happy times. They may be prints to post (and return) or in digital format ready to send by email. Each member can send up to 5 images. The April Newsletter will include details of where to send your pictures, the closing date will be September and the display will be at our festive meal in December 2020.

*Anthea Bond*



## *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.

**Scottish Heritage and History** holiday in June still has vacancies – see under Advance Booking below.

### **Tuesday 21st January: Talk: Martin Tideswell - The changing face of Journalism.**

Martin as Editor in Chief of the Sentinel is in a unique position to assess the present and the future of the press. He has had more than 30 years' experience as a Journalist. Martin was brought up in Sneyd Green and has occupied a prominent place in local affairs organising many campaigns and sitting on many local committees.

### **Monday 24<sup>th</sup> February: Car outing: Brynkinalt Hall, Historic House Nr. Wrexham.**

Due to popular demand this is a repeat of the trip held on 19<sup>th</sup> November.

It will be worth getting up early to enjoy the best of the day at this Grade 2\* house built in 1612. 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 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.

If you were on the waiting list for the November trip you should already have been invited to subscribe to this. A review of that visit was very favourable but unfortunately we were unable to include it in this issue.

### **Tuesday 25th February: Talk: Jean Finney - The Origin of Nursery Rhymes.**

Jean is a singer and songwriter at home and also on cruise ships. She does various talks which are history based. The origin of nursery rhymes is a shocking revelation of what nursery rhymes really mean and how they match up.

### **Wednesday 11th March: Coach Trip: Shibden Hall and Piece Hall Halifax.**

If you're interested in textiles, particularly wool and cotton, you will love this day out.

Our visit starts at Shibden Hall where Gentleman Jack was filmed. For three hundred years (c. 1615-1926) the Shibden estate was in the hands of the Lister family, wealthy mill-owners and cloth merchants, the most famous resident being Anne Lister (1791–1840), who became sole owner of the hall after the death of her aunt. On Anne Lister's death the estate passed to her lesbian lover, Ann Walker, who died after being forced into an asylum. Possession then returned to the Lister family, who donated it to Halifax Corporation.



From Shibden we will drive to the centre of Halifax for lunch at the Calderdale Industrial Museum – soup, sandwich and Kettle crisps, tea or coffee – all included in the price. Following lunch we will have a guided tour and be shown the development of industry in Halifax and Calderdale from domestic textile manufacture in the seventeenth century through to modern machine tools.

Nearby is the Grade I listed Piece Hall which you might have seen as the setting for a recent Antiques Road Show. It is the sole survivor of the great eighteenth century northern cloth halls, a class of buildings which embodied the vital and dominant importance of the trade in hand-woven textiles to the pre-industrial economy of the West Riding of Yorkshire, from the Middle Ages through to the early nineteenth century.



Dating from 1779, when it was built as a Cloth Hall for the trading of 'pieces' of cloth (a 30 yard length of woven woollen fabric produced on a handloom), the Piece Hall was the most ambitious and prestigious of its type and now stands in splendid isolation as the only remaining example. It is one of Britain's most outstanding Georgian buildings.

From its inception, the Piece Hall was a stunning combination of commerce and culture, an icon of hard business but also a broader statement about the history, the lives and the values of its surrounding community. This fascinating mix of purpose and idealism – business, arts and people, continues to influence and drive the Piece Hall's role today. A direct link back over almost a quarter of a millennium of history.

You should be aware that during the day there will be uneven surfaces and a few steps.

We leave Newcastle at 8am in the morning and return for home at 5pm, and expect to be back in Newcastle for 6.30, traffic permitting.

Cost: £38 (non-members £40) to include tea or coffee, coach, admission, lunch, drivers tip etc.

Please apply to Cynthia Dumbelton including a cheque and stamped addressed envelope. Enquiries: Tel: 01782 641765; email: [dumbeltoncynthia@gmail.com](mailto:dumbeltoncynthia@gmail.com)

### **Tuesday 17th March: Talk: David Skillen - A general introduction to the American Civil War.**

David last visited us in October 2018 when his subject was the Royal Observer Corps. This time he will talk on the American Civil War which he has studied in detail for many years. David has travelled extensively across the USA visiting the battlefields from the Civil War as well as the Alamo.

### **Tuesday 24th March: Car Trip: Crewe Hall, Weston Road, Crewe, CW1 6UZ.**

This Grade 1 listed building is surely a Jewel in the Crown of the area though it is known to many as simply a high-class hotel and wedding venue. The original Jacobean mansion, once the home of the Crewe family, was rebuilt and refurbished after a fire in 1866 and has since been restored to its nineteenth century splendour. The intricate plasterwork and wood carving, the beautiful stained glass and the succession of magnificent rooms, from the Reception Hall to the Long Gallery make this an exceptional venue equal to many National Trust properties. In the Chapel, there is such a wealth of decoration that it is difficult to know where to look first and the other rooms are just as ornate from floor to exquisitely worked ceiling. The Great Library has one of the loveliest ceilings in the Hall

with a Wedgwood motif centrepiece and fine strap work; the walls are lined with fine medallions depicting English and Classical authors and scenes from their works.

Following our guided tour of the Hall we will be treated to a substantial cold lunch comprising a delicious selection of sandwiches, home-made cakes and scones and as much tea or coffee as you would like, served in our own private room. Special dietary requirements can be catered for if you advise me of them on your booking form. After lunch, if you wish, you can stroll through the surrounding landscaped gardens.

There are wide stairs to the upper floor and there is also lift access; a wheelchair is on site if needed. Disabled parking spaces are available next to the Hall if reserved in advance. We shall meet in the Reception Hall at 11.30am from whence the tour will begin.

Cost £26 (non-members £27) to include guided tour of the Hall, lunch, access to the gardens and the usual donation to the National Trust.

CHEQUES WILL BE CASHED AT THE END OF FEBRUARY AS ADVANCE PAYMENT IS REQUIRED BY THE HALL.

THE VISIT IS RESTRICTED TO 40 MEMBERS. Please apply to Rose Wheat, including a cheque and stamped, addressed envelope by January 27<sup>th</sup>.

Enquiries: Tel: 01782 616113; e-mail: [rose.wheat@virginmedia.com](mailto:rose.wheat@virginmedia.com).

### **Wednesday 25th March 2020: Walk around Tittesworth Water, Meerbrook, near Leek.**

This will be a fairly easy walk of nearly 5 miles, with a few gradients, around Tittesworth Water, enjoying open views of the surrounding moorland countryside, including the Roaches and Ramshaw Rocks. Although there are reasonably good footpaths all around the reservoir, stout walking footwear is advised.

Take the A53 from Leek towards Buxton, and turn left (signposted towards Meerbrook and the reservoir) immediately before the Three Horseshoes Inn. The entrance to the reservoir grounds is about one mile on the left, before you enter Meerbrook village. There is a charge for parking (currently £3 for two hours or £5 for the day - two hours should be sufficient for the walk).

A carvery lunch will be available, if required, at the end of the walk, at the Three Horseshoes ST13 8TW, tel. 01538 300296 (other meal choices will be available). The walk will start at 10.00 am at the entrance to the Tittesworth visitor centre ST13 8SW (which has a café and toilets, open at 10.00).

Suggested donation for the walk is £2.00 for members, £2.50 for guests, payable on the day (reduced in view of the parking charge). Children, and dogs on leads, are welcome at no charge.

Please book your places for the walk (and lunch if required) with me, Peter Wilson, by email to [peterwilsonendon@btinternet.com](mailto:peterwilsonendon@btinternet.com) or by post to Greenbank, Church Lane, Endon ST9 9HF. In emergency to contact me on the day, please call 07756 873666.

## Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> April: Car Outing: Dorothy Clive Garden.

As part of our anniversary celebrations – our National Trust Association has been in existence for 40 years – an outing has been planned to visit the spring flowers at the Dorothy Clive Garden, near Market Drayton TF9 4EU. It seems appropriate to have an outing on the actual day of the anniversary.



The Dorothy Clive Garden is a charitable garden trust, set up by Colonel Harry Clive as a place of rest and continued horticultural education for the general public. Located in glorious countryside on the North Staffordshire, Shropshire and Cheshire borders, the garden is both formal and informal, hosting a network of paths that invite the visitor to explore and discover the intimacy and tranquility of the garden.

We will be met at the garden's car park at 10.30 in time for a coffee in the café (own expense) prior to the tour – a “walk and talk” - commencing at 11.00am. You will also be free to enjoy lunch in the café after the tour (own expense).

Cost: £10 to include a donation to the Association. Numbers limited to 30. Members only.

Please book your place with Jane Cameron, enclosing booking form, cheque and stamped addressed envelope. Enquiries to tel: 01782 750940, email: ladybirdjane@gmail.com.



## Tuesday 21st April: Talk: Danny Wells - Cooks Tours.

Danny came to talk to us in November 2018 when his subject was: The Victorians and the Christmas Season. Now he applies his skill and interest into the travel company Thomas Cook: how it started, how it progressed and no doubt how it failed. A very topical theme and not what we anticipated when it was booked.

## Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April: Car Trip: 'Pipes in the Peaks', Thorpe, Derbyshire.

This is an opportunity to visit this unique venue where we will enjoy a Sunday afternoon of music provided by the wonderful sounds of the **Compton Cinema Organ**, originally installed in the ABC / Regal Cinema, Derby, played by the one and only Phil Kelsall, principal resident organist at the Tower Ballroom, Blackpool. The organ was purchased by the owner of Thorpe Garage, Dave Thorpe, in 1990 and completely restored over a

number of years. The first concert took place in 1999 and last year the venue celebrated 20 years of entertaining thousands of people with music old and new.

Location: Dovedale Garage, Thorpe, Ashbourne, DE6 2AT.

Tickets are £14.50 (£15.50 non members) which includes the usual NT donation. Please allow plenty of time to park and to take your seats once the venue opens at 2 pm. The concert starts at 2.30 pm.

There is a very nice public house (The Old Dog) across the road from the venue where you could have lunch prior to the concert if you wish. You would need to book well in advance as it is a very popular venue. Tel: **01335 350990**. Also in the area are the Izaak Walton Hotel in Dovedale and the National Trust Tea Room in Ilam.

Please apply to David Wright including a cheque and SAE by 28th February. Enquiries: Tel 01782 392737 / 0781 491 8792. Email: david@wright353.plus.com

### **Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> April: Coach Trip: River Mersey Cruise, U Boat 534, lunch at Adelphi & Walker Art Gallery.**

We will board the 10.00am River Explorer cruise at Pier Head and a half-hour journey, during which we can buy a tea or coffee (own expense), takes us to Woodside where we disembark. This is the site of U534, a WWII German submarine where we will have a self-guided tour. The U boat was sunk by the RAF in May 1945 off the coast of northern Denmark. It was raised by an entrepreneur in 1993 as it was believed to be carrying Nazi gold but none was found. The U Boat is in 4 sections and there is original film archive and interactive displays. Many artefacts are on display including an Enigma machine.

At 11.30 we catch the ferry back to Pier Head where our coach will take us to the Adelphi Hotel. There we will have a 3 course hot and cold buffet lunch (included) and a chance to see the public lounges of this iconic hotel.

At 2.00pm we leave for the Walker Art Gallery. There will be a 2½ hour stay here giving members an opportunity to view the permanent exhibitions. Details of the special exhibitions have not been published at the time of going to press but will be sent with the acknowledgements. For some of these there will be a charge which members will pay at their own expense. We will leave at 4.45pm arriving at Newcastle by 6.30pm.

### **Coach departs Newcastle at 8.00am prompt as we have a ferry to catch!**

**Cost:** £31 (£33 non-members) to include ferry cruise, entrance to U534, lunch, free exhibitions at Art Gallery, NT donation and driver's tip.

Please apply with booking form to Jane Mayer, tel. 01782 533476, email: [janemayeruk@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:janemayeruk@yahoo.co.uk)

## *Advance Booking*

*The following items from our Summer programme need to be booked in advance:*

### **Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> May: Car Trip: Evening Canal Cruise and fish & chip supper.**

Cruise will leave Norbury Junction at 6 pm for our 3 hour journey traveling north along the Shropshire union canal.

As we travel past a line of attractively painted moored boats there are fantastic views of Norbury Church and across the rural farmland. Kingfishers, Herons, Moorhens & Ducks are just some of the wildlife that you may see.

Park at the Marina, but limited space so please share lifts.

Cost £18 (non-members £19) inclusive of fish & chip supper & NT donation. There is a licenced pay bar open for the length of the trip.

Booking form, SAE and cheque made out to North Staffs NT Assoc to Michael Lycett, by 22<sup>nd</sup> April. Numbers limited to 42.

Tel 01782 502919, e-mail [lycettmichael@hotmail.com](mailto:lycettmichael@hotmail.com)

### **Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> May: Coach Trip: Coventry Transport Museum and Cathedrals.**

The coach will leave Newcastle at 8.15 a.m. for our morning visit to the recently refurbished Coventry Transport Museum. On arrival, we will have an introductory talk, followed by a guided tour of the Transport Museum. On display are numerous modes of transport and, in addition, there is much to see which reflects the social history of the city.

Discover the fascinating story behind the development of some of the most unique vehicles ever invented. Housed in 14 galleries, they include an extensive collection of early bicycles, motor bikes, cars, (including many vintage and classic cars), armoured vehicles, buses and some of the fastest vehicles ever built. It is claimed to be the largest publicly owned collection of British made vehicles and all manufactured in Coventry.

Another gallery is devoted to a Sounds/Light Blitz Experience, where you can relive the horrendous bombing that Coventry experienced during WW2 and view an original Anderson Shelter.

Lunch (at own expense) can be taken in the on-site café or at one of the many eateries around. We will reassemble at 2.00 p.m. at the Guides' Meeting Point in the Cathedral, to commence our guided tour of both the old and new cathedrals.



The new cathedral, designed by Sir Basil Spence, is a powerful reminder of the City's enduring role in promoting peace and reconciliation and stands alongside the old cathedral ruins that were blitzed during WW2. In the new cathedral are many notable items of interest, including the John Hutton glass screen, The Baptistry Window, the Tapestry of Christ the

Glory and the Epstein figure of St. Michael and the Devil.

Cost £35 (non-members £37). Cost to include coach, admission and guided tour of the Transport Museum and both Cathedrals, driver's tip and the usual contribution to the National Trust.

Please apply to Bob Winter, including a cheque and stamped addressed envelope. Enquiries: Tel: 01782 642942, email: [robert.winter14@btinternet.com](mailto:robert.winter14@btinternet.com)

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

There may still be some spaces available on the Scottish Heritage and History holiday arranged for us by Regent Travel, 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 included with the last Newsletter, or see or download copies from our website. (If you don't have Internet access phone Regent on 01785 818202)

#### **We are still looking for a new Chairperson!**

As Ralph announced at the AGM, he is relinquishing this post next May, and we are still seeking a candidate to succeed him. If you would like to find out more about what is involved, or could suggest someone suitable, please contact him or any member of the committee.

## *Membership*

We have pleasure in announcing and welcoming the following new members: Doreen Harper, Manjit and Ramlesh Nayar, Mariet Schepers, Frances and Stuart Haywood, Bill and Catherine Price, Liz Rogers, and David and Hilary Farnsworth. This takes our membership to 358.

**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.

## *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!*

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 (In Case of Emergency) 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.

## *Reviews of Recent Events*

### **Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> July: Coach Trip: Leominster & Croft Castle<sup>NT</sup>**



After a speedy journey, we walked to Corn Square in Leominster, where we had time for a potter after a much needed coffee. Then our group were taken on a leisurely stroll to see some of the town's interesting buildings and learn some of its history. I admired the streets of handsome Georgian houses we passed en route to



Grange Court, the former Market House/Town Hall of 1633. Most impressive for me was the huge Priory Church, with some traces of its Norman origins and incongruously housing a ducking stool. We also saw the Forbury Chapel, used by worshippers, when the somewhat debauched monks forbade entrance to the Priory Church.



After our guided walk, we drove the short distance to Croft Castle, with its glorious



views of the Herefordshire countryside. The interior felt quite homely and there were very informative exhibitions detailing aspects of the lives of Croft family members. The dining-room was rather creepily laid out with jackets over the chair backs, as though the colleagues of the Under-Secretary for War, Henry Page Croft, were about to return,



and Churchill could be heard speaking. For me and for many of us, it was the huge walled garden that was the highlight, with the biggest herbaceous borders, a vegetable garden, a sunken area and areas left uncultivated for wild-life, all filled with the colourful flowers and shrubs of July. There was even a vineyard of 450 vines, the white wine made locally. Thanks to Ivan Smith for a great day out.

*Kay Williams*

## **Wednesday 31st July: Car Trip: Peover Hall, Gardens & Park, and Churches.**

This impression of what it was like to take part that day is being written a long while after the event. Therefore, what remains is a vivid memory, but should not be relied on for facts.

Firstly, who knew there were so many Peovers with Churches so far apart? Having become lost before the rendezvous, we saw several twice. The first church showed by way of stained glass and sculpture how successful the local landowners had been in marrying anyone with a coat of arms for miles. The tombs with traces of polychrome decoration and intricate detail, would come as a shock if seen as originally intended. The second church, nearer the Hall, contained a spectacular ancient font with a cover lifted by a pulley. However its chief claim to fame is the legacy of a well-educated clergyman and his heiress wife who were so forward thinking and founded a school in the village. Thanks are due to our special guide in the village who was excellent.



On equally top form were the chefs and staff at The Bells of Peover who provided a splendid lunch so expertly. It really is a stunningly atmospheric and attractive hostelry. We then moved to Peover Hall and Estate. It was wonderful to see this thriving estate in such good order. I understand the owners acquired it in the fairly recent past so it was good to see how successful they have been in furnishing the house so sympathetically. Both the house and gardens are a credit to the staff who maintain

them so well and we paused frequently in admiration as we made our way to a lovely tea in the stables.

Thank you Janet, ably assisted by John, for arranging such a varied and enjoyable day.

*Ralph White*

## **Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> August: Walk: Rudyard & Lunch at Rudyard Hotel.**

23 members and guests had a very pleasant approximately 4 mile walk around Rudyard Lake on a fine and warm morning. Underfoot it was generally good despite the previous heavy rain, although in parts the ground was soft and muddy. We had a talk by Ray Perry in January 2019 on the Lake and it was interesting to see the points of interest he had described and to remember the history of the Lake.





Rudyard Lake provides some of the most dramatic scenery to be found in the Staffordshire Moorlands. It was built as a reservoir in 1797 and covers 168 acres and even to this day the Lake still supplies the canal system for which it was originally designed. Today its major role is not industrial but the provision of leisure pursuits and on our walk we saw the narrow gauge

railway which runs along the shoreline, the statue to Blondin the tightrope walker who demonstrated his amazing skills to the Potteries crowds, the sailing club and the many beautiful chalets and houses which adorn the shore. It is a boating and sailing centre and many types of craft could be seen, adding to the relaxing atmosphere.

The walk was completed in a leisurely two and a half hours including a coffee stop and then a most enjoyable morning was concluded with an excellent lunch at the Rudyard Hotel. Many thanks go to Peter for his first class organisation and his hours of preparation.



*David Morgan*

### **Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> August: Coach Trip: Renishaw Hall & Walking Tour of Sheffield.**

After enjoying a pleasant drive to Renishaw Hall in Derbyshire our party of 33 members arrived at this splendidly located estate looking forward to our tour of the house and stables. First though, we were treated to some excellent coffee and biscuits.

The Stables are home to several thriving and varied businesses, including a café, shop and workshops. The hall was built on the proceeds of the iron and steel industry by the Sitwell family and has been in their care for some 400 years. Renishaw Hall is still a lived in home to the Sitwell family, with Alexandra Sitwell the current head. The family has somewhat of a chequered history. The Sitwells have always been avid collectors and patrons of the arts and, as such, the family history is filled with writers, innovators and eccentrics.

We were taken around the ground floor during our one hour visit and there were some fine examples of furniture, paintings and ceramics. The splendid dining room was added in 1793 and is very ornate. In 1805 further house extensions took place but in 1847 it was put on the market. However, it did not meet the valuation and it was mothballed for a while.

The grand ballroom was opened by Prince Albert and remains a fine room.

Unfortunately, there was very little time in our busy schedule to visit the gardens but a most enjoyable visit nonetheless before we moved on to Sheffield.

## Sheffield City Centre

The Steel City has undergone a number of transformations in recent years, especially in the City Centre. In particular the old underground shopping mall of the 1960's has now gone but the city is a vibrant place with a plethora of sporting, entertainment and cultural attractions.

We were taken on a conducted tour around the centre and focused on the splendid City Hall with its grand illuminated roof. The Hall is now host to a wide variety of entertainment shows including classical, pop and comedy shows.



All in all a most enjoyable visit with two widely different venues to satisfy our cultural appetite as we returned to North Staffordshire.

*M. Wheat.*

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

This was the Association's first annual holiday organised in conjunction with Regent Travel and we must thank them and their Tour Manager, Lynn Barrow, for arranging a splendid Hotel venue and an action packed and fascinating introduction to the splendours of Suffolk and surrounding Counties.

### Sunday 1st September: Travel to Sudbury via Stamford and Ely.

We were picked up from various locations with the majority boarding the coach in Newcastle. We met our tour guide Lynn for our tour and set off for what we hoped would be a dry, sunny five days' holiday. Our first stop was Stamford, a captivating little town of yellow stone houses and shops. We heard that the town was featured in filming 'Middlemarch' and other period dramas. Then the coach made its way across countryside

as the A14 had been closed. The scenery was spectacular with fields stretching as far as the eye could see over the flat lands of East Anglia. There were many tractors moving around with bales of hay, straw or wheat. It was really nice to see views of such agriculture in action.



Ely was our principal stop today. We disembarked outside the cathedral, were handed welcome leaflets and had a short time to discover some of the delights. The Norman nave is the longest in the country and the Octagon at the crossing, a 14th century engineering feat, is an impressive structure of timber, glass and lead standing on eight massive stone pillars. Our group then split into two for a walking tour of Ely and we were shown the major buildings. When King Henry VIII destroyed the monastery, he kept the school which existed here at the time and he saved all the cathedral schools in the



country, calling them King's Schools which exist today. In Ely the King's School provides the choir for church services. Unlike some cathedral cities, Ely cathedral really appears to be at the heart of the town, dominating the life of that city.



From here we had a short drive before arriving at The Mill Hotel in Sudbury, our home for the next few days.

*Cynthia Dumbelton*

### **Monday 2nd September: Constable Country.**

On a glorious sunny day we departed The Mill at Sudbury with our guide, Claire, for a day mainly dedicated to John Constable. We travelled through many picturesque villages scattered along the Stour valley with houses of timber frame and thatched roofs. Our



first stop was East Bergholt, the birthplace of Constable. The 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>C church of St Mary is unusual for having a wooden bell cage instead of a tower as the latter was to have been paid for by Cardinal Wolsey until his fall from grace ended the funding. The bells are not rung from below by ropes but the headstock is manipulated by hand by ringers standing beside the bells each Sunday, the oldest and heaviest five rung in England today.

Our journey next took us to Flatford Mill <sup>NT</sup> where Constable's father had his flour milling business and scene of 'The Haywain'. The Stour was a working river navigable for the 24 miles from Sudbury to the sea and boat building and repairs were done in the dry dock. Constable depicted the working life of the river and his recording of the social history of the time made him more popular in France than in England where landscape paintings were more stylised.



Our lunch stop was in Dedham where Constable went to school and home to the famous church whose tower, built by Margaret Beaufort, the mother of Henry VII, features in all of Constable's landscapes although not often in the same place! The church boasts an original Constable painting of Christ ascending to heaven, one of only three such religious paintings.



Our final stop was Lavenham, a village with over 300 listed buildings. Lavenham in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries was one of the main producers of blue dyed woollen broadcloth and its inhabitants became very rich. An NT volunteer in the 1529 Guildhall of Corpus Christi told us of its religious origins in Saxon times to becoming a medieval merchant guild. The building is timber framed sporting many timbers as an indication of wealth, as are the houses. They escaped later modernisations as

an influx of Dutch Protestants to Colchester and Norwich, fleeing persecution in the later 16thC, produced a lighter and superior cloth thus impoverishing the inhabitants of Lavenham. Henry VIII enacted legislation in 1547 placing all guildhalls in the ownership of the Crown and the decline of Lavenham's Guildhall was only arrested by the local MP, Sir William Cuthbert Quilter, who in 1890s bought and renovated it and subsequently gave it to the NT on condition it was used for the benefit of the people of Lavenham.

*Jane Mayer*

## **Tuesday 3rd September: Bury St. Edmunds and Ickworth House <sup>NT</sup>.**

We travelled to Bury St. Edmunds through the attractive villages of Cavendish and Clare, while Claire, our excellent local guide told us interesting snippets about the villages and houses. She pointed out the local pargetting, decorative plasterwork on the sometimes jettied houses, many half-timbered and thatched, and of course, some painted in Suffolk pink.



Arriving in Bury St. Edmunds, we looked round this splendid cathedral, with the new Millennium Tower and its brilliantly gilded and painted vaulted ceiling and then explored the beautiful Abbey Gardens. I was impressed by the planting designs and still vibrant late summer colour. I was surprised by the extensive remains of what was the huge St. Edmunds Abbey, with the 150 metre-long church and the spot marked where the discontented earls and barons discussed their grievances against King John, leading the following year to the sealing of Magna Carta.

We then had time to visit St. Mary's, the civic church of Bury St Edmunds, one of the largest parish churches in England. It claims to have the second longest aisle, and the largest West Window of any parish church in the country. We saw the tomb of Mary Tudor, Henry VIII's favourite sister in the Sanctuary.

In the afternoon, we travelled to Italianate Ickworth House. Despite the scaffolding, you could see the extraordinary Rotunda. Inside. I liked the Library, with the wall-covering and furniture covered in Gainsborough Silk from Sudbury. I was particularly struck by the luminous self-portrait of Elisabeth Vigee-Lebrun, having recently learnt about her from an Art Society talk. We then had time to walk round the gardens and down to the church and walled garden, still being recreated as they were 100 years ago, so rather empty of mature planting.



*Kay Williams*

### **Wednesday 4th September: Tidal Mill, Aldeburgh, Snape Maltings and Southwold.**



After days of sunny weather we woke to rain, just as we were off to the seaside! Fortunately, it soon cleared up and normal service resumed. Our first port of call was Woodbridge Tidal Mill where enthusiastic local guides took us through the milling process from grain to flour – you could even buy a packet of the finished project and some of us did. The unsocial hours of the miller were described to us – two shifts a day according to the tides – and also his exposure to occupational disease, corn lung, caused by the constant flour in the atmosphere

before the invention of extractor fans. We also learnt about the 'chattering damsel', a small mechanical invention that I couldn't even begin to explain. This was a fascinating visit and I could have stayed much longer but today was full-on and so back to the coach and our next destination, Snape Maltings.



A venue having strong connections with Benjamin Britten, it is an extensive complex including the purpose-built concert hall which hosts the annual Aldeburgh Music

Festival. There are also art galleries, numerous independent shops, cafés and a pub, where we enjoyed a delicious lunch. Again, I could have spent much longer here – one Aladdin's cave of a shop would have made a splendid start to my Christmas shopping and I rather fancied the sculpture trail, but it was time to progress to our next port of call, Aldeburgh.



Our main purpose in visiting this picturesque seaside town, also much associated with Britten, was to view the memorial to him created by Maggie Hambling. Situated on the shingle beach it comprises two steel scallop shells, one four metres high and the other much smaller, inscribed with words from Britten's opera, Peter Grimes. To say that this structure has created controversy would be an understatement. I love it and so did many in our party; others were less complimentary!



We still had one last venue to visit – Southwold, or Hampstead by the Sea as it is currently known. Famous for its pier, colourful beach-huts and old-world charm, it will forever stick in my mind as the home of the Pair of Piddlers Clock. I'm sure I don't need to describe the mechanics of this time piece which performed every half hour but regrettably the piddlers were not punctual, as we discovered to our disappointment when we turned up to take photos or even in one member's case, a video.

This was an action-packed and super day, full of interest, culture and entertainment.

*Rose Wheat*

## Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> September: Return home via Newmarket and Anglesey Abbey <sup>NT</sup>.



We were early enough at the Palace House, Newmarket for some of us to enjoy a drink before meeting our guide, Frankie McGhee who took us around Newmarket. First we went to Warren Hill where Frankie told us how Newmarket came into being when James 1 got lost in the mist and had to stay here and liked it so much he built a Palace. She told us that there were 81 trainers with 300 horses and it cost £130 per month to use the training grounds. We saw some horses using the gallops and were told they went out in lots, first those horses being raced within 48 hours, then those racing within a month and the rest followed later. We then toured around seeing where various studs and owners' houses were. After driving through the town we saw where Tattersalls hold 9 sales a year lasting 3 or 4 days each and then on to the Rowley Racecourse. Frankie gave us a wealth of information about racing and the personalities involved in the industry (which is the sixth largest in the country).

We returned to the Palace House where we could visit the museum in the Trainer's House, the gallery in Palace House or see some horses being exercised.

After a short drive, we arrived at Anglesey Abbey where we could have lunch and visit the house, mill and gardens. They were getting ready for the Dazzling Dahlia celebration next week and the tall dahlias were in full bloom and looked magnificent. The house is now open most of the year and was very interesting. We were very lucky with the weather and we could enjoy the gardens in the sunshine before boarding the coach for our homeward journey.

*Madeleine Hopley*

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



In the informative museum we were given a brief history and a video on casting methods. The company moved to Loughborough following a successful conditional bid to cast eight bells for the local church, stipulating they must be made locally. Good road and canal links plus the forthcoming new railway links were a deciding factor.

The Building is Gradell\* Listed and manufacturing methods rely on old skill sets with no integrated link between Computer Aided Drawings and the manufacturing processes.

There was a spectacular fiery demonstration of molten cast iron, sourced from recycled vehicle brake discs, being poured from a furnace into a large crane-held ladle, prior to pouring into moulds producing bell headstocks.



The church bells are cast slightly oversize from bell metal (77% copper and 23% tin) costing £10K/tonne. This gives a true attractive harmonic sound. Tuning is done by removing metal from the inner profile using trial and error method. Tested using a mix of old and modern methods a tuning fork/critical ear and a frequency generator.

We were fortunate to see a partly finished Carillon ordered for Perth, Australia, and Kay gave an impromptu rendition of happy birthday on several small bells which drew spontaneous applause.

Many thanks to Mike Lycett for such a well organised and informative visit.

*David Burns*



After a very convivial lunch at “The Three Nuns” pub not far away from the foundry we were taken to Loughborough Central station portrayed in the style of the 1950s, which has featured in several films. We descended the original wooden staircase to a platform, and boarded a steam train. The Great Central Rail-way, which is eight miles long, was formed in 1897 and became UK’s last steam main line.

We went through very pleasant, undulating countryside, with hills in the distance, and at one point crossed a large lake with many swans and geese on it. We stopped briefly at Quorn and Woodhouse station in the style of the 1940s, and then went on to Rothley station, rebuilt by volunteers in the style of the Edwardian era. The journey ended at Leicester North station, rebuilt in the 1960s, the original station having been demolished. After a brief stop we returned to Loughborough.



It was noticeable how smart and pleasant the railway staff were. Each station had pots of beautiful flowers which added to the enjoyment of our rail journey. Many thanks are owed to Mike for organizing this for us.

*Sue Corlett*

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

Rick gave a very authoritative, interesting and fascinating talk on Antarctica. The audience was absorbed by his wonderful photos and diagrams. He explained in simple terms much of the science of the impact of CO<sub>2</sub>, the interrelation between the physical geography and the wonderful natural life to be found there and embellished the talk with his personal observations of his visit. The vastness of the continent was explained and how it is the canary in our global climate system, teeming with wild life and once seen, never forgotten. A wonderful talk, beautifully delivered.

*David Morgan*

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

Not being a beer drinker I wondered if this would be the trip for me. However I became fascinated to learn about the way in which the drink was produced. The scientific expertise and passion about the product was clear to see - a shame as a pint is downed rather quickly in convivial company! Walking around the brewery with the stainless steel pipes and vats and huge copper containers was really interesting. Everything was so very clean and sterile like a laboratory. We then visited the stables



to see the two Shire Horses, quietly munching on their hay, making us feel we had stepped back into history. Back in the brewery bar tasting the different brews was very popular, and discussions as to which was everyone's favourite made for an interesting and lively debate. After lunch of sandwiches and chips we had a short walk to our next location.



The Staircase House started life as a small timber framed dwelling. Over time it grew into a large mediaeval townhouse then in this century into complete disrepair. Fortunately it has been saved and sympathetically restored. It was so interesting to be able to see the way the old walls were constructed. Wattle and Daub, wonky floorboards, and rooms representing the progression of the centuries. The showpiece, however, the Staircase, although beautifully restored, with wonderful carving was, for me, a disappointment as it was roped off so we could not actually walk up it, which is what the house was about. The building was so unusual it was hard to know where you were, taking twists and turns, up and down, dark places then light rooms. A truly wonderful house.

Thank you Helen and Bronwen for organising such an interesting day which I for one certainly enjoyed.

*Julia Davies*

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

The aim of the walk was to explore the eight pools on the Keele Estate. The weather in October had been terrible; rain most days. The forecast for the Sunday was diabolical; however, it miraculously stopped as we arrived at the 'Dick Turpin' pub and did not return until we had finished the walk. Understandably, there were a couple of cancellations due to the weather and ill-health, but eight of us, and one well-behaved dog, set off climbing a fairly steep meadow to Butt's Wood; which is a mature wood with a variety of trees, well maintained by Newcastle Borough. The land was given to the Borough by the Sneyd family in 1877 for a Military camp and a gun range. Here there was a great view north and on a clear day, one should be able to see Mow Cop. A few more brave walkers joined us here, as pre-arranged, near the very impressive, new Caudwell Children's Centre for Autism, in the Science Park. We entered the woodland of the Keele Estate and came upon Pool 5. Here, the plan was to turn left to descend to Pools 6, 7 and 8, but progress had been very slow due to the muddy, slippery conditions, so Richard judiciously decided that we would miss them out and continue through the woodland passing Pools 4, 3 and 2. The famous flamingos were absent—very sensibly migrated south for the winter! The woodland area and the pools were landscaped by a gentleman named William Emes in 1768-1780.

We re-entered the Campus and wound our way through the residential area, passing the Observatory and on through the New Science Park. Downhill through Butt's Wood again to arrive back at the 'Dick Turpin', spot on time for lunch! We had walked 4.1 miles, instead of the planned 5, because of the conditions underfoot.

The menu at the pub was extensive, something for everybody, and the service was prompt and pleasant. Thanks to Richard for taking good care of us and his meticulous planning!

*Iain Forrest-Hay.*

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

By a lively, clear, passionate and knowledgeable talk Rachel reinforced how important the National Trust is to this country and how important it is to look after what we've got. She ran through her portfolio which included Little Moreton Hall, Hare Hill Gardens, Helsby Hill, Thurstaston Common and Alderley Edge, explaining what has been done and will be done to maintain and further improve those areas of beauty and wonderful houses.

Rachel praised the NSNTA for its generosity towards Little Moreton Hall and went into some detail about the extensive rewiring which had to be undertaken to render the Hall safe. She explained also what her key performance indicators were underlining the importance of staff satisfaction in delivering good service to the many visitors. Volunteer recommendation was an important factor in assessing how the properties were performing.

This was an exciting talk, very well received with many excellent questions at the end. Rachel answered them with enthusiasm and skill. It was a most enjoyable evening.

*David Morgan.*

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## Summary of Programme Spring 2020

| <b>January</b>                              |                                                                 |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tuesday 21 <sup>st</sup>                    | Talk: Martin Tideswell - The changing face of Journalism        |
| <b>February</b>                             |                                                                 |
| Monday 24 <sup>th</sup>                     | Car Trip: Brynkinalt Hall Nr Wrexham.                           |
| Tuesday 25 <sup>th</sup>                    | Talk: Jean Finney - The Origin of Nursery Rhymes                |
| <b>March</b>                                |                                                                 |
| Wednesday 11 <sup>th</sup>                  | Shibden Hall and Piece Hall Halifax                             |
| Tuesday 17 <sup>th</sup>                    | Talk: David Skillen - An introduction to the American Civil War |
| Tuesday 24 <sup>th</sup>                    | Car Trip: Crewe Hall                                            |
| Wednesday 25 <sup>th</sup>                  | Walk: Tittesworth Reservoir and Lunch at Three Horseshoes       |
| <b>April</b>                                |                                                                 |
| Wednesday 1 <sup>st</sup>                   | Car Trip: Dorothy Clive garden                                  |
| Tuesday 21 <sup>st</sup>                    | Talk: Danny Wells - Cooks Tours                                 |
| Sunday 26 <sup>th</sup>                     | Car Trip: Pipes in the Peaks                                    |
| Thursday 30 <sup>th</sup>                   | Coach Trip: Mersey Cruise, U534, Adelphi lunch & Walker Gallery |
| <b>May</b>                                  |                                                                 |
| Wednesday 13 <sup>th</sup>                  | Car Trip: Evening canal cruise with fish and chip supper        |
| Tuesday 19 <sup>th</sup>                    | AGM. Speaker TBA                                                |
| Thursday 21 <sup>st</sup>                   | Coach Trip: Coventry Transport Museum and Cathedrals            |
| Wednesday 27 <sup>th</sup>                  | Walk: Astbury nr. Congleton                                     |
| <b>June</b>                                 |                                                                 |
| Mon 22 <sup>nd</sup> - Fri 26 <sup>th</sup> | Coach Holiday: Scotland. Regent Travel                          |

*This Newsletter (along with previous editions) is available on the website.*