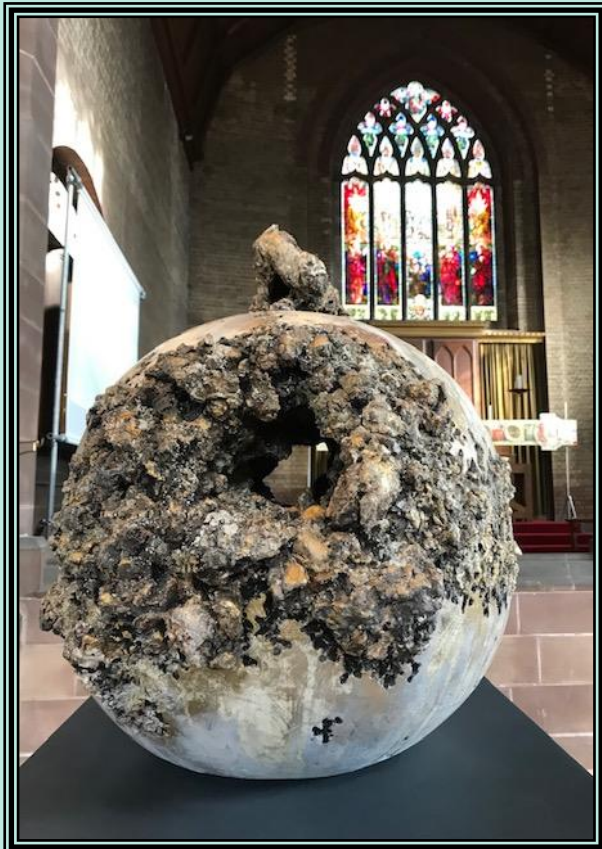


North Staffordshire National Trust Association

Newsletter No. 127

Winter-Spring 2024

www.northstaffsnt.org.uk



"Outage" by Rebecca Griffiths at the BCB

© Anthea Bond

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 of at least 8½" x 4" 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 National Trust makes insurance arrangements, including public liability insurance, for Supporter Groups that carry out volunteering/activities for the benefit of the National Trust.

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.

The Newsletter is published in April, August and December. Copy and correspondence for each issue should be addressed to NSNTA.newsletter@outlook.com (01782 791360) by the **15th of the preceding month** at the absolute latest (but earlier if possible!)

North Staffordshire National Trust Association

Newsletter No. 127

Winter-Spring 2024 Programme

A Note from the Chair



A Happy New Year to members old and new, members of The Trust and otherwise.

The year has already begun well - we have been given one of the best Christmas presents one could have, Anthea Bond having agreed to be Talks Organiser. Anthea is a very capable person with a wide variety of interests. We look forward to her choice of talks.

Remember when you go to a talk at the Conference Centre for free parking enter your car number in their system, otherwise you will be charged.

Anthea is not responsible for this new idea!

The world is not full of joy at the moment so to get me through January and February, apart from our events, I am growing my own bowls of 'Cheerfulness' and looking forward to the Keele cherry blossom accompanied by the effulgent Peter Thomas.

Fragrant Greetings to All.

Regards

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.*

Some events book up very early, others more slowly. You can check with the organiser or the STOP PRESS on the web site if events are full or are undersubscribed, or if it has been necessary to change details or booking arrangements, availability etc. or there are other matters which may be of interest. Do let the organiser know if you are interested in an event but can't attend so the feasibility of repeating it on another date can be assessed. Remember also the web site has copies of past Newsletters going back to 2002, and also a list of past events. The latter is fairly sketchy for the earlier days so if you can add more information, dates, corrections etc., or have good copies of earlier Newsletters that could be added, please get in touch with the editor.

### **Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> January: Talk: Bill Klemperer - "His Work".**

Bill Klemperer is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and will be talking about his work as Principal Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Historic England. He'll talk about his work and describe some projects, including work on some castles and other monuments in the Welsh borders – including some work they have done with the National Trust.

### **Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> February: Talk: William Durose - "Sixteen in the Sixties".**

"Sixteen in the Sixties", which is the history of the Sixties, voted our favourite decade, looks at local and national events during each year. There is a nostalgic look at TV programmes and advertising, all accompanied with live hit songs of this iconic decade.

### **Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> March: Car Trip: RAF Cosford Museum and Cold War Exhibition guided tour.**

A unique insight into the history of the cold war, the immense threat that shaped all our childhoods. The tour explains the different ideologies of the western powers and the communist bloc, the social impact, and more positively the resultant technological achievements.



The museum is open from 10.00 a.m. till 5.00 p.m. The guided tour of the Cold War Exhibition is at 2.00 p.m. There are two additional tours at the museum, covering the Battle of Britain and the history of bomber command. We have not included either in our itinerary, however time permitting, they may be of interest.

Cost: £6 (non-members £8) pp for the tour; the entrance to the museum is free. Parking is extra, booked on line @ £6.50 per car, or on the day @ £7.50, to be paid individually. Lunch is available in the museum café at own cost.

Please apply to Phil Alcock enclosing application form, cheque and SAE by 18<sup>th</sup> January. Enquiries to phil.alcock@yahoo.co.uk or 01782 502919 / 0781 402 8828.



## Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> March: Talk: Susan Monro - "The Elizabeth's Group".

Susan Monro will be talking on Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy and the Group's campaign to



get her recognised, and their successful campaign to get the statue "Our Elizabeth" which is now standing in Bridge Street in Congleton. She will discuss the work they have in progress and introduce a short film that tells the story of Elizabeth.

"Though she be but little, she is fierce".

## **Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> April: Coach Trip: Walsall Leather Museum and Art Gallery.**

This fascinating museum tells the story of the leather trade in Walsall, charting the town's rise from a small market town into an international saddle-making centre; the local football team are still known as 'The Saddlers'. We shall have tea/coffee and cake on arrival before taking a guided tour of the exhibition galleries and workshops which show what it was like to work in the leather industry over a century ago. We will also have the opportunity to make our own key-ring (included in the cost) before taking a short walk into the town centre, where there are several food outlets, for lunch (at own expense).

In the afternoon, you will be free to visit the town's magnificent art gallery, (free admission) another easy walk, which houses the prestigious Garman/ Ryan collection. Kathleen Garman was married to the famous sculptor Jacob Epstein and as well as examples of his work, there are paintings by Constable, Degas, Matisse, Monet, Picasso and Lucien Freud, filling two floors. On floors 3 and 4, there are further examples of international art.

We shall board our coach for the return trip at 4pm and will arrive back in Newcastle between 5pm and 5:30pm, depending on traffic on the M6.

A lift is available at both venues. A map will be provided of the town centre.

Cost: £22 (£24 for non-NSNTA members) includes coach fare, driver's gratuity, premium package at the Leather Museum which includes guided tour, tea/coffee and cake, make your own key-ring, and donation to the National Trust.

Please apply to Rose Wheat before the end of February if possible, using the booking form and enclosing cheque and SAE. Enquiries: [rosewheat@virginmedia.com](mailto:rosewheat@virginmedia.com) or 01782 616113.

## **Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> April: Talk: Steve Booth - "The Potteries Blitz - June 1940 - March 1941".**

Steve Booth is an established speaker on the North Staffordshire circuit who recently spoke to us on the destruction of Lidice in 1942.

Tonight his fully-illustrated talk looks in detail at all the bombing attacks in North Staffs - there are a lot of really local connections to the Hartshill area.

## **Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> April: Guided tour of the Flowering Cherry Trees at Keele.**

The National Collection of Flowering Cherry Trees is in the grounds of Keele University. The blossom is spectacular in April, with several species flowering at slightly different times. In Japan, the blossoms flower at the same time, and then the display is all over for another year!

Dr. Peter Thomas came to talk to us in April 2023, we already know how enthusiastic he is about trees. His 2022 book, *Trees*, in Collins New Naturalist Library, was the winner of the Marsh Ecology Book of the Year Award.

The tour will be on Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> April, 10.30-12 noon. There should be plenty of free parking in the Students Union carpark. We shall meet at the bottom of Cherry Tree Walk, near the chapel, to start our walk at 10.30. Phone number for urgent calls on the day is 07931 747632.

Places are limited. Please send your form and cheque for £6 by 30<sup>th</sup> March to Anthea Bond. Enquiries to [antheabond@hotmail.com](mailto:antheabond@hotmail.com).

## *Advance Booking*

*Some events in the following programme need to be booked before, or very quickly after, the next Newsletter is published:*

### **May: Car trip: Hawarden Village and Holywell.**

It is planned to have a car trip one day during the week 13<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> May but unfortunately it has not been possible to finalise details in time.

Hawarden Village near Chester is where Gladstone lived. We would have a guided tour around the Old Rectory (large, gothic building), then onto the church which Chris would tell us about, then onwards to Gladstone's library before taking a walk around the open estate where Gladstone walked. Lunch could be taken at the restaurant.

For the afternoon we would probably visit Holywell or possibly Erddig, both nearby.

Please contact Chris Wain at [chris.wain@btinternet.com](mailto:chris.wain@btinternet.com) or on 07798620818 to be notified of details when they are available and to book a place.

### **Thursday 6th June: Car Trip to Buxton for a Guided Tour of 'The Buxton Crescent Experience'.**

Buxton Crescent is a Grade 1 listed building. It was built in the 1780s by John Carr of York for the 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Devonshire as the centrepiece of his Georgian Spa development at Buxton. Structural problems and deteriorating conditions lead to its closure in the 1990's. It has been restored with funding from The National Heritage Memorial Fund, Derbyshire County Council and Historic England. A programme of repairs costing £68M over 6 years was undertaken to completely restore the building. In 2020 it was opened as a 5-star Spa hotel (Ensana Hotel).

The Buxton Crescent Experience has been created in 9 rooms of the Crescent. We will be guided in groups by knowledgeable guides who will give us an insight into the



fascinating hidden histories of the town and hear the in-depth stories and discover how the town and the wonderful Crescent building came to exist. At the end of the tour, you will learn about the 5000-year journey of the famous Buxton water.

We will meet at the **Pump Room Visitor Centre at 10.30** where tea and coffee can be purchased. The guide(s) will then take us to the Crescent where we will then be split into groups ready to commence our tour at **11am**. The tour will take between 1½ and 2 hours and includes a visit to the **Pump Room** to see the **Spring** and also **St. Ann's well**. (Don't forget to bring a container to fill at the well!!)

**ACCESS:** There are a few steps leading down to the 'Experience Rooms'

After the tour you have the choice of having lunch as a group in the '**Pavilion Gardens Tea Room**' or choose to eat individually at one of the eateries in the town.

Please complete the '**Lunch**' section on the booking form if you would like to lunch at the **Pavilion Gardens Tearoom**.

If you would like to see more of Buxton after lunch the **Pavilion Gardens** are beautiful and well worth a visit. The **Devonshire Dome** (Derby University's Buxton Campus) is open to the public during term time. If you like a good second-hand bookshop, **Scrivener's Victorian Bookshop** at 42 High Street is really quirky and has been voted one of the Guardian's 10 best second-hand bookshops. There are 40,000 books over 10 floors!!

Buxton is approximately 50-60 minutes from Stoke, depending on traffic and roadworks.

I suggest that we park on the **Pavilion Gardens Car Park** which is situated on the right as you approach the town. **Postcode SK17 9AR**. Charges: 2-4 hrs £3.60; over 4 hrs £5.40. Payment with **Cash** (coins) or by **PayByPhone**. There are toilets.

The cost of the Guided Tour is **£15.50** for members and **£16.50** for non-members.

## **RESERVING A PLACE ON THE TRIP**

Please send a booking form with cheque and SAE to Joan Harvey. Further information or to reserve a place on this car trip to Buxton please contact me either by telephone on **07814918792** or email: [joanharvey694@gmail.com](mailto:joanharvey694@gmail.com) to put your name(s) on the list.

*[Editors note: - The Red Hot Chilli Peppers are on at the Opera House in the evening!]*

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> – Friday 6<sup>th</sup> September: South Wales Holiday at New House Country Hotel.

Next year's NSNTA Coach holiday will be a 4night/5day holiday to **South Wales**, an area of rich history and stunning coastlines. It will be from **Monday Sept. 2<sup>nd</sup> – Friday Sept. 6<sup>th</sup> 2024**, based near Cardiff at the **4\* New House Country Hotel**.



Members will receive a Flyer giving details and a booking form soon after Christmas. This should be returned to Regent Travel (Tel. 01785 818202) promptly to avoid disappointment, as hotels now ask for a very early financial commitment.

## *Talks Organiser*

We are very pleased to report that Anthea Bond has very graciously agreed to take on the post of Talks Organiser, and we are very grateful for her offer. She will be ably assisted by Hazel Glover and others in the introduction and thanking of speakers.

Anthea has been a valued member of our Association for a number of years organising a number of very successful activities, walks and car trips. She has been active in attending events and making useful suggestions and comments. Her varied interests and experiences will be great asset in her role of Talks Organiser.

## *Membership*

We have pleasure in announcing and welcoming the following who have joined since we last welcomed new members: Marie Jennings, Elizabeth Walklett, Margaret Legge, Ken & Janette Ryder, Paul & Denise Spratt, Christine Bell, Margaret Booth, Janet Rushton, Carole Brindley. Current membership is 259.

# *Have Your Say!*

The committee are always anxious to know members' views on the activities of the NSNTA. The last Newsletter included a questionnaire which around a third of our members returned – thank you. We are still happy to receive feedback either in the form of the completed questionnaire – there's one on the website if you can't find the last Newsletter – or in any other form: if we don't know what people are thinking we can't adjust the programme to suit as many as possible.

## **NSNTA Members' Questionnaire August 2023**

At the time of writing this, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> November, we had received 61 replies (from 178 invitations sent out).

Replies so far are as follows:

### **Question 1, which events do you attend?**

|          | Never | Some | Most | No response |
|----------|-------|------|------|-------------|
| Talks    | 7     | 18   | 35   | 1           |
| Coach    | 7     | 31   | 18   | 5           |
| Car      | 12    | 29   | 14   | 6           |
| Walks    | 20    | 27   | 8    | 6           |
| Holidays | 18    | 24   | 13   | 6           |
| Socials  | 11    | 23   | 23   | 4           |

### **Question 2, are you attending more or less often post covid?**

More = 15, less =20, same/no response = 26.

If less, why? Nine replies mentioned health/mobility issues, and one mentioned financial insecurity.

Has Covid affected you socially? 3 yes, 3 no, most did not respond to this.

### **Question 3, How do you rate our...?**

|          | V.Good | Good | OK | Poor | No response |
|----------|--------|------|----|------|-------------|
| Talks    | 24     | 24   | 3  | 0    | 10          |
| Coach    | 33     | 15   | 0  | 0    | 13          |
| Car      | 20     | 19   | 1  | 0    | 21          |
| Walks    | 16     | 17   | 1  | 0    | 27          |
| Holidays | 25     | 10   | 1  | 0    | 25          |
| Overall  | 32     | 20   | 3  | 0    | 6           |

**Question 5, Would you recommend us?**

Yes = 57, No = 1, no response = 3

**Questions 4 and 6, free comments**

Twelve replies thanked the committee and organisers.

Nine suggested daytime talks, and one said keep them in the evening.

Eight referred to the need for more publicity, with four suggesting a social media presence.

Five wanted later starts to our coach trips and/or shorter trips.

Three would like other coach pick-up points.

Three mentioned IT problems at talks (lighting and/or hearing).

Two for theatre trips.

Two for social events.

Two showed a preference for weekday events over weekends, and one vice versa.

One each for reducing the singles supplement, reducing the £25 holiday donation, easier walks, historic towns with blue badge guides, more local history, more car trips, train trips (London?), arboreta, wildflower centre in Liverpool, control dogs on walks, more holidays especially short breaks, an event in August, committee should wear name badges and mingle more.

Thank you to all those who have replied so far. Your answers are encouraging in that we seem to be pleasing most people most of the time, and have indicated several areas where we are considering changes.

If you have yet to send in your reply, please still do so – it will be read and counted in the results.

## *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 note that I do have problems managing photos sent other than as jpg attachments to emails – see the Event Report request in Documents on the website for guidelines.

All these photographs, and many more, are available on the website, and we are also grateful to Chris Wain who has given us access to his extensive range of photos for some of these events – links will be available on our website.

## *Reviews of Recent Events*

Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> August: Car Trip – Visit to a Woodland Craftsman, near Telford.

On a sunny and warm August day we met at The Mill Inn in Leighton near Shrewsbury which was first established in 1086 and was thankfully saved from closure a few years back by local investors and is now run as a “community pub”.

Some members were delayed by a road traffic accident en route but we eventually met with Mike Taylor (“The Woodland Craftsman”) at his base within the 11 acres of woodland that he and his wife purchased over 10 years ago.

Mike worked in a senior position in the steel industry for 30 years before making a dramatic change of career, swapping the steel mills for a quiet and idyllic woodland glade. In his own words he has turned something that he enjoys and is passionate about into his business.



Mike welcomed us with coffee and biscuits despite there being no water or electricity within a mile or so of his woodland base! He explained that he has two areas of activity. Firstly he “Coppices” (a much more physical version of garden pruning) a different area of woodland each winter for the benefit of the woodland plants, mammals and insects. Coppiced trees regrow over the following years and this is a sustainable form of woodland management which has been used for centuries.



He also produces handmade wooden items mainly for the home or garden using traditional wood working techniques. When the wood is freshly cut, hand tools such as froes, knives and axes plus a man-powered pole lathe can be used to make the most of our beautiful native British hardwoods. Some items were on display and were indeed purchased by our members.

All in all a delightful and insightful day down in the woods where we really did commune with nature!

*Ivan Smith*



## Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> September: Coach trip: Dyrham Park<sup>NT</sup>, Gloucestershire.



It says in the brochure that Dyrham Park has been ‘reworked’ and ‘re-imagined’. This is a massive understatement! This magnificent house, built by William Blathwayt between 1690 and 1710, has been interfered with in so many ways over the centuries – I just kept thinking, as I wandered around, “if only these walls could talk”! It has been subjected to some extremely vulgar and inappropriate ‘updating’ over the years and, even now, work is continuing to restore it to as it was in its prime.

Built by William Blathwayt, a wealthy and powerful man who strode the corridors of power as MP for Bath, War administrator for William III and Administrator for the Colonies, Dyrham was built on the site of a [Continued



previous Manor House; in fact, there has been a dwelling on this site since Roman times. On his marriage to Mary Wynter in 1686 William decided that he needed a much grander house, as befitted his status and also somewhere he could entertain other important people. His architect was Richard Talman and the landscape designer was George London; both at the top of their profession at the time. Because of his Colonial contacts William was able to 'source' luxury woods, such as cedar and walnut, to panel walls or construct staircases. In addition, his connexions to the East India company provided 'gifts' of Carrera marble; luxurious silks and Delft china. The fact is that he benefitted hugely from involvement with the slave trade. Interestingly, on our visit, there

was also a large party of people from Bristol but of Caribbean heritage walking around the house.....one can only guess at what their thoughts might be.

Mary and William had two sons; William in 1688 and John in 1690 but sadly Mary died in childbirth in 1691. As young gentlemen they were sent on the Grand Tour between 1705 and 1708. William came home to manage the estate but John, who was very musical, founded an opera company with George Frederick Handel. William senior died in 1717 at Dyrham and so began two centuries of neglect and financial problems leading to it being in a poor state of repair.

In 1938 the incumbent Blathwayt leased the Dyrham to a Lady Anne Islington who utilised the premises as an Anglo-American nursery during the war years. She belonged to a group of 'Lady Decorators' and was responsible for the sin of painting the magnificent Great Staircase white with gold trimmings and papering many rooms with wall papers or marbling paint effects.



In 1949 Lady Anne left the premises and a Justin Blathwayt briefly moved in but, very quickly, the Ministry of Works purchased Dyrham and ran it as a memorial to the

dead of the WW2. The desecration descended to a new level when it was converted into flats. A sad nadir.

1961 saw the National Trust come to the rescue and over the last 60 years has been restoring the house and the gardens back to its prime. This is an on-going project and



a mammoth task as was obvious on our visit. A huge crane was laying metal foundations for what will be a parterre. This meant we had to enter through the servant's quarters – not the best start! First stop was up five flights of very narrow stairs to the Conservation area in the attics. These rooms were crammed with everything found in the house but not of the period 1690-1710. Everything from parasols to furniture and paintings is strictly curated and labelled. The conservator told us that they have a constant battle against woodworm, silverfish and woolly mammoth! In the main house painstaking work has finally removed the white and gold paint from the Great staircase and the Balcony room has been

relieved of its grey/pink & orange marbling [circa 1980]. Elsewhere, appropriate furniture and paintings are being lovingly replaced to enhance the enjoyment of the many visitors, including us.

Ralph's impeccable organisation produced a lovely sunny day and some of us enjoyed our first, but possibly not our last, ride in a Mobility bus!

*Katie Forrest-Hay*

## Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> September: Talk: Ross Underwood - "Kyrgyzstan".

Based entirely on ignorant prejudice I did think this talk could be one of our more eccentric choices. I am so glad I went. To me it was the highlight of the season.

Ross Underwood is the newly appointed head gardener at Goldstone Hall, Hinstock. His career so far has taken him to some distinguished horticultural places locally, and based on his excellent delivery at our talk I think he will go further as a speaker.

He must have energy and enthusiasm to spare after looking after 5 acres at the hotel because this talk was the result of a taxing specialist trek in a fascinating country. We heard about the economy, the politics, the landscape, the people and their customs. What I remember is the plants featuring in excellent photographs.

I can't wait until we see some of the unusual forms of familiar species here.



There was something for everyone in this well-crafted and delivered account and I hope Ross, when he has been on another adventure, will come and tell about it.

*Ralph White*

### Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October: Car Trip: Staffordshire Museum Collection Stores, Beaconside Business Park, Stafford.

This was a return visit to the stores after the April 27<sup>th</sup> event was oversubscribed. Anthea Bond gave a very comprehensive write-up to that in the last issue of the Newsletter so there is little that can be added. Here are a few more photographs.



## Friday 13<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> October: Coach Trip: 2 nights/3 days Mini Holiday in Salisbury, staying at the historic 4\* Red Lion hotel.

### Day 1 – Sudeley Castle

A yellow weather warning had been issued for the Midlands for heavy rain. It was raining when we left the Potteries and continued until we arrived at Sudeley Castle when, miraculously, it stopped, just in time for our short walk from the visitors' centre up to the castle, where our guide was waiting. She gave a very



comprehensive history of the Castle and its historic relevance. Then after a light lunch, we dispersed to explore the exhibition, the Castle and the extensive gardens.



The original Castle was built between 1369 and 1469 and suffered over the years from its owners having the unfortunate habit of picking the wrong

side historically; it was continuously in and out of royal ownership. Its most famous occupant being Queen Katherine Parr whose tomb is in the Castle's church. The Castle's demise finally came in 1649 when it was slighted by the Round Heads.

The Castle now lay in ruins for the next two hundred years until by chance in 1820 it



was discovered by two wealthy brothers, John and William Dent, whose fortune came from manufacturing gloves. This was the age of the Romantic Movement and the brothers saw the potential of the ruins and, after protracted negotiations, they purchased it from the Duke of Buckingham.



The Dent family proceeded to transform the ruins into a stately home, so that the Castle is now architecturally a mixture of medieval and Victorian romantic. The Dent-Brocklehurst family still live in part of the Castle, the current occupant being Elizabeth Lady Ashcombe.



We reconvened on the coach just as it started to rain again, but we had been able to enjoy both the house and gardens. The rain got steadily heavier and we were pleased to arrive at The Red Lion Hotel in Salisbury, a historic hotel, and our base for the following day.

*Phil Alcock*

## Day 2 – Arundells, Mompesson House, The Cathedral



well as the opportunity to sit in his chair and play a few notes on his piano!

We spent Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> October at Salisbury, and enjoyed a beautiful sunny day. We started the tour with a visit to Arundells, Ted Heath's former home and its gorgeous garden. There was a fascinating collection of cartoons of him on the hall wall, as



The garden contains a poignant memorial to the *Morning Cloud* which was wrecked in the storm in the autumn of 1974, with the loss of his godson and another crew member. The whole house and garden



survive as a depiction of his whole life – the sailing, the music, the wartime experiences, as well as the politics. It made a lovely cosy house, and it felt as though he had only just left the room and might return at any time.

We went on from there to visit the National Trust property Mompesson House, another lovely house nearby in the Close. We could also wander generally in the Close, with its famous views painted by Constable, and where the Salisbury Museum with the famous Amesbury Archer is also situated. Salisbury turns out to be the country's biggest cathedral close



– we had never realised on previous visits how far it extended. Afterwards we had a tour of the Cathedral itself, and attended Evensong, with an excellent visiting choir.



*Sandra and Christopher Wain*

### Day 3 – Coughton Court

On our final day we visited COUGHTON COURT in Warwickshire. This is the home of the Throckmortons a Catholic family who were persecuted for their Faith, and who were linked to the Gunpowder Plot.



This was a very different experience for us, being so used to visiting NT properties displaying their possessions in pristine condition and in sumptuous surroundings, because the house is undergoing major building refurbishment. The roof has been leaking for some time and needs to be completely replaced at a cost of over

three million pounds. The money has been raised from various sources, the scaffolding erected and a two year programme of work has begun, it was very interesting to see how the items are so carefully catalogued and packed away in order to be placed in storage in several of the rooms until the work is completed.

We climbed a tricky spiral staircase to reach the top floor of the house, the Tower Room, which had served as a secret chapel and had a priest hole which descends through 3 floors to the ground. In this room we also saw the Ely Tabula, created with paint on linen in 1596 to commemorate the Catholics who refused to accept the Protestant faith. This tabula was discovered in the roof space



by the family in 1900 and during the roof restoration it will have to be lifted out through the air by crane as it is too



large to be taken through the doorways and the spiral staircase: we thought this would be a wonderful spectacle to view.



The grounds house two churches, Catholic and Church of England. In the latter we followed a printed guide and saw many fascinating items including the tomb of Katherine Parr's aunt, and a Dole Basket which was used to carry loaves of bread for distribution to poor parishioners. We learned this was the origin of our use of the phrase "being on the dole".



The gardens were still very beautiful, even for October, and were resplendent in their autumn colours in such an enormous walled garden.

At the end of the afternoon we were picked up by our driver Michael who made excellent time in returning us to the "drop off" points.

Yet another fabulous trip in the company of like-minded fellow members, and this time we could really appreciate the work of the NT in preserving these wonderful properties for us to enjoy!.

With grateful thanks to Marion and Cynthia, and to Rose for organising a "fun quiz" on our last evening together! "HERE'S TO THE NEXT TIME!"

*Hazel Glover*

## Tuesday 17th October 7:15pm: EGM and Talk: Shaun Farrelly - "The Atlantic Telegraph"

### **Minutes of the EGM at the North Staffs Conference Centre.**

Richard Adams welcomed 72 members to the EGM. There were 2 apologies.

**Opening remarks:** This EGM was called by the committee to consider and to vote on a proposal to permit non-members of the National Trust to join our Association. The background to the proposal is the continuing decline in our membership numbers, from nearly 400 about ten years ago, to around 250 now. Some events are now under-subscribed and having to be cancelled; attendances at our talks are going down while the costs are increasing; the committee is ageing and needs some new younger members.

Membership of this association is currently only open to members of the NT (or volunteers, staff, Scottish NT members etc but we don't have any in these categories).

Some members are leaving our Association because they are not renewing their National Trust membership. This is usually because they are less mobile, or have visited the local properties many times, or for financial reasons.

Other people who might like to join us are not currently NT members and are put off by the cost of joining.

NT membership is currently £84 a year for one person or £139.20 for a couple. This reduces by 25% after three years' membership for the over 60s. If we approve this change to our constitution, anyone joining will be required to state that they support the main object of our association, to support and prosper the work of the NT.

Many of our outings are to NT properties; non NT members would have to pay the entrance fees on top of the cost of the trip.

**Discussion:** Members were concerned that non-NT members could in future be in a majority, and that a future committee might decide not to donate to the NT as we do now. Other members felt that the ongoing requirement to uphold the current Objects of the Association would prevent this, and that the NT itself could intervene if this were to happen.

Members would no longer be obliged to continue NT membership, so the NT could lose out in this way.

Outings would be more difficult to manage if some participants needed to pay either beforehand or on the day for admission to NT properties.

**Voting:** 69 votes were cast by members. 59 were in favour of the change and 10 were against. This was an 85% vote in favour from the members present and voting, which exceeded the two-thirds majority requirement for a change to our constitution. Motion carried.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm.

### **Talk: Shaun Farrelly - "The Atlantic Telegraph"**

Shaun is an enthusiastic speaker covering various aspects of early communications and also a wide range of other topics. Today he gave us an insight into the trials and tribulations leading up to the completion of a successful, albeit short lived, trans-Atlantic telegraph cable after so many repeated failures.

He outlined the background of the formation of the companies to manage and lay the cables, and of those involved in their manufacture: how the two firms each making half the required length of cable had wound the iron armouring in opposite directions causing a problem in splicing them together, how the first and second attempts in 1857 and 1858 failed after a loss of cable, a storm and ongoing repeated breakages. A third attempt later in 1858 was successful and messages were exchanged. However it was extremely slow and failed after a few weeks, possibly due to an attempt to speed it up by applying higher voltages.

## Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> October: Car Trip: BCB Festival tour, All Saints Church .



On a gloomy afternoon 20 of us assembled in All Saints Church on the Leek Road for a guided tour of the British Ceramics Biennial. The church was cold but the welcome was extremely warm. Our guide was Clare Wood (Artistic Director and Chief Executive of the BCB). She explained that “Award” featured ten UK-based artists who had created new works especially for the BCB. All working in clay, they had been selected by an expert panel, for their bold and thought-provoking works.

Clare guided the group around the exhibits, which were spaced throughout the church. The works were all so very different. Rebecca Griffiths imagined a future landscape in which remnants of the nuclear power industry had been dredged from the North Sea (cover photo), whereas Jasmine Simpson’s work “There are devils in my house” took inspiration from the Hellmouth fireplaces of the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Rebecca Appleby’s “Gaia” featured large “disrupted spheres” exploring her interest in balancing structure and order against disorder and disarray. A contrast was Dan Kelly’s pots representing a deeply personal view of the changing landscape of London.

The winner of the competition was Mella Shaw’s “Sounding Line”. This aimed to raise awareness of the over use of marine sonar which has such a devastating effect on whales, who have their own sonar systems. Visitors were encouraged to hold ropes which resonated with a sonar pulse. The large sculptural forms being inspired by the whales’ tiny ear bones.

As we walked round, we were accompanied by the sound of a sonic installation of sequenced ceramics created by Copper Sounds, in which the ceramics were played by mechanical beaters.

The exhibition continued outside. “Beyond Repair” displayed donated shards together with a series of small bowls, which addressed the fragility of clay. This work by Elsbeth Owen, an 85 year-old artist, pondered on what to do with the ‘leftovers’ of a working life.

The final exhibit was “Mad in Stoke” by Carrie Reichardt featuring a 1969 Ford Zodiac covered with mosaic tiles and ceramic plates. This was inspired by Stoke’s rich night life, with particular focus on Shelley’s nightclub in Longton. It certainly brought back memories for some of our members!





We enjoyed our visit immensely. We were so grateful to Clare for an outstanding tour. Her extensive knowledge was essential to our understanding and appreciation of this most unusual exhibition. Our thanks too to Ralph who organised the afternoon.

At the end of the tour, we had the opportunity to return to many other exhibits and also admire All Saints Church itself, which was inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement and is Grade II listed.

*Margaret Glanville*

### Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November: Lunch with optional Walk: The Wharf, Cheswardine.

Our walking group set off in to the countryside around Cheswardine, passing through fields of head-high crops, sheep pastures, and wooded drumbles. Recent heavy rain



had produced some challenging muddy areas – if we were racehorses, I think the ground would be described as “heavy going”. So, a short cut back to the pub was called for, missing out the canal section of the walk.

A change of clothes on the car park, and we were ready to join the rest of the group inside the Wharf Tavern. A good meal and good company, enjoyed by all present!

### Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> November: Talk: Jill Rezzano : - "New Vic Theatre".

Jill is Head of Education and gave a fascinating talk on the many facets of The New Vic Theatre. Her talk commenced with the theatre’s inception as the first purpose-built theatre in the round in Europe, through to the present day.

We were surprised to hear how self-sufficient the theatre is, from its set and props design, cutting-edge lighting engineering, costume design and production, all of which is produced in-house. We also learned that all the actors are paid the same rate, regardless of their role. Lockdown proved to be a blessing for the theatre, as with the help of a generous grant, the whole auditorium was re-furbished.

Jill then explained the work of the Education Department and its award winning work within the community. The Saturday morning drama class is for the 4–9-year-olds, whereas the Youth Theatre cover the ages 10-19. There is also a class for young people with disabilities which is supported by the actors and is often conducted using sign language for the benefit of the deaf students.

Funding for the Education Department often comes from external sources and a recent production consisting of 90 young people was sponsored by the Chatley Foundation.

There are also 2 ongoing activities for adults, which includes a dementia project for both patients and carers and also the Open House Café on Tuesday mornings in the theatre café, for lonely and isolated people. Here they have an opportunity to enjoy a free coffee and meet up with other people also in need of company, with staff on hand to provide support if necessary.

Jill gave us a well-presented insight into the aspects of the theatre that many of us knew so little about.

*Bob Winter*

## **Postscript: Donation to Mompesson House, The Close, Salisbury.**

Occasionally, if an Association visit to an NT property has been particularly enjoyable, we give a donation for a specific purpose as a long lasting souvenir.

Mompesson House has a frontage divided into two distinct halves. Like two sisters, one of whom didn't get the memo. One is highly decorated and says 'look at me', the other is rather plain and whose function in life was to look after the servants of the more glamorous.

I discovered The Trust wanted to restore the balance by improving the wall, the border behind and the plainer facade by planting various roses. David Austin Roses advised on the scheme and will be planting in the bareroot season.

The project and its modest cost of £350 seemed popular with members on the Salisbury trip therefore The Association agreed to fund the work. So, next summer, the less ostentatious sister will have her party dress on.

*Ralph*



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| <b>Programme Summary and provisional future dates</b> |                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>January</b>                                        |                                                                            |
| Tue 16 <sup>th</sup>                                  | Talk: Bill Klemperer - "His Work"                                          |
| <b>February</b>                                       |                                                                            |
| Tue 20 <sup>th</sup>                                  | Talk: William Durose - "Sixteen in the Sixties"                            |
| <b>March</b>                                          |                                                                            |
| Thu 7 <sup>th</sup>                                   | Car Trip: RAF Cosford Museum and Cold War Exhibition guided tour           |
| Tue 19 <sup>th</sup>                                  | Talk: Susan Monro - "The Elizabeth's Group" on Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy |
| <b>April</b>                                          |                                                                            |
| Tue 9 <sup>th</sup>                                   | Coach Trip: Walsall Leather Museum and Art Gallery.                        |
| Tue 16 <sup>th</sup>                                  | Talk: Steve Booth - "The Potteries Blitz - June 1940 - March 1941"         |
| Sat 20 <sup>th</sup>                                  | Guided tour of the Collection of Flowering Cherry Trees at Keele.          |
| <b>May</b>                                            |                                                                            |
| TBA                                                   | Coach Trip: Hawarden and Holywell                                          |
| Tue 21 <sup>st</sup>                                  | AGM and talk                                                               |
| <b>June</b>                                           |                                                                            |
| Thu 6 <sup>th</sup>                                   | Car Trip: "The Buxton Experience"                                          |
| TBA                                                   | Coach Trip: Levens Hall, Kendal, Cumbria                                   |
| <b>July</b>                                           |                                                                            |
| TBA                                                   | Car Trip: Goldstone Hall gardens & lunch                                   |
| <b>September</b>                                      |                                                                            |
| Mon 2 <sup>nd</sup>                                   | South Wales Holiday: 5 days / 4 nights at New House Country Hotel          |
| Fri 13 <sup>th</sup>                                  | Coach Trip: Ludlow Food Festival (and Church?)                             |
| Tue 17 <sup>th</sup>                                  | Talk: TBA                                                                  |
| <b>October</b>                                        |                                                                            |
| Fri 11 <sup>th</sup>                                  | Car Trip: Chillington Hall                                                 |
| Tue 15 <sup>th</sup>                                  | Talk: TBA                                                                  |
| <b>November</b>                                       |                                                                            |
| TBA                                                   | Coach Trip: Birmingham Symphony Hall behind the scenes                     |
| Tue 19 <sup>th</sup>                                  | Talk: TBA                                                                  |

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