

# North Staffordshire Association of National Trust Members

**NEWSLETTER No. 70**

**DECEMBER 2004**

**and JANUARY to APRIL 2005 PROGRAMME**

## **A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR:**

The poor summer weather clearly did not dampen the spirits and enthusiasm of most Association members, as the majority of outings booked up very quickly and most took place in reasonably good conditions. Indeed, both the May holiday and the September one were blessed with gloriously fine weather which contributed greatly to everyone's enjoyment. How good is that for inspired forward planning!

However, we were disappointed at having to cancel the planned trips to Weston Park and the Staffordshire Wildlife Centre because of insufficient bookings and I know how many of you were very disappointed when the Jaguar visit had to be cancelled because of the sad announcement of the likely closure of the Brown's Lane plant.

The committee is currently in receipt of much information and advice from the National Trust about the organisation of future holidays. This mostly concerns issues regarding insurance and risk assessment and obviously new practices are being required. This needs considerable thought and investigation so the committee must spend some time working through the implications of all this for our own future programme. Until we have further clarification from the Trust, our well-tried and tested ways of arranging holidays will no longer be possible.

Our current Minutes Secretary, Sue Willson, is anxious to leave the committee in order to fulfil other duties so we urgently need a replacement. We would be delighted if an Association member would be willing to join us to take minutes and send out copies to committee members. Sue would initially act as an advisor if necessary but the task is not onerous. Any offers? Please contact me or any other committee member – we need your help!

With all good wishes

*Anne Anderton*

## **NEW COMMITTEE MEMBER**

The Committee is pleased to announce that Mrs Bernice Mulliner has agreed to be co-opted as a Committee member. We are grateful to her for her help.

## **AN APPEAL**

Could you spare 2½ - 3 hours once a week as a volunteer Room Guide at Little Moreton Hall? The season begins late March and ends late October, Wednesday to Sunday. The area covered in the South Range consists of the Long Gallery and below that the Secret Room, the Guests' Bedroom, what was the Guests' Hall and the Prayer Room. The Knot Garden also requires a watchful eye from anyone who prefers to be out of doors.

If you are interested please contact Mrs Alix Fulton-Trend at LMH (01260-272018). Details of personal experience can be obtained from Pat Bentley (01782-615716)

## **TYNTESFIELD**

On 3<sup>rd</sup> September I had the honour of representing the Association at a day organised at Tyntesfield to thank Associations for their support and to demonstrate the Trust's work in practice. When Tyntesfield came on the market, Associations, including your own, rapidly responded with considerable sums of money which helped to make the purchase possible.

We were addressed by the Property Manager, Ruth Gofton. This young lady started as a teacher, but worked for various properties before being interviewed for the job. She was appointed before the Trust had the keys to the property, and before she had even been inside. When she arrived one of her first jobs was to run round with buckets to catch the water from the leaking roof. She was expected to open to the public within two days of arriving as it had been decided that the property would not be shut for 4-5 years while being renovated, but that the public should see work in progress. The present waiting list contains 600 coach parties. Contractors such as stonemasons, conservators, plumbers etc. who do work in the house are required not only to do the job, but to explain what they are doing to visitors, and also to have an apprentice on the job who is learning the trade.

Ruth Gofton is a great enthusiast, who is wholeheartedly taking part in the Trust's new policy which encourages access to properties and participation in activities based there which provide motivational experiences to the people who take part. She works with groups of schoolchildren, ex-offenders and

others, using work camps and other activities which seem to be extremely successful. I was greatly impressed by her approach.

We were taken round the parts of the house open to the public. Some of the rooms are most impressive – the carvings and panelling being especially noteworthy. In time the upper parts of the house will be prepared for access, but there are 44,000 items to be recorded and described by the volunteers, mostly at present housed in the upstairs rooms. If you have the chance of a visit, take it!

Ewart Okey.

## **NATIONAL TRUST SHEEP**

In last January's issue we reported how part of our donation to Berrington Hall was being put towards the maintenance of a small flock of sheep. Here is one of them, called Corisande!



## **SPRING HOLIDAY in Ripon 2005**

It had been hoped to arrange a Spring Holiday based on Ripon, to run from 8 – 12 May, in fact bookings had been taken from many members. However, it is with great regret that your Committee has decided to cancel this holiday and not offer any other in 2005.

The National Trust has recently issued all Associations with guidelines for organising holidays to comply with the requirements of the Package Travel Regulations and the new insurance requirements of the F.S.A. Until the full implications of these measures are fully understood we feel it unwise to organise holidays on our own this year.

This will mean a considerable drop in the amount we can donate to the Trust, so please support our Jan – April and April – Sept events. If you would like to arrange any fund-raising activities such as coffee mornings, Bring and Buy, garden party, fête etc, please contact a Committee member.

## NATIONAL TRUST NEWS

**National Trust Plant Collection.** This collection of cottage garden perennials includes 24 varieties of plants chosen for domestic gardens, based on their performance at National Trust gardens. They have all been grown in peat-free compost and three are named after Trust gardens: Artemisia Powis Castle, Lavender Hidcote, and Pulmonaria Sissinghurst White. They are now available at selected garden centres.

**Rose Print Collection.** This is a new collection of photographic prints of roses from Trust gardens, comprising four black and white and four colour prints, all available in A3 or A4 size priced from £30. Call 0870 240 4197

**Special diets catered for.** National Trust cafés and restaurants now cater for visitors with special dietary needs. Catering teams have been developing their skills to provide dishes for people with a range of needs, from vegetarians to people with coeliac disease and wheat intolerance, lactose intolerance or nut allergies.

**Beddgelert.** A new exhibition has opened in Ty Isaf, Beddgelert to highlight the history of the eighteenth century cottage and former farm, which was more recently a National Trust shop.

**The White Cliffs of Dover.** The Trust is to repopulate areas of land at the White Cliffs of Dover with a rare plant that is close to extinction. Meadow Clary (*Salvia pratensis*) is currently known to exist in only three small locations along the cliffs and in other very small locations. Seed has been collected and propagated, and approximately 70 plants will be re-introduced.

**Peregrines return to Plymbridge.** A partnership between the National Trust, RSPB and Plymouth College of Further Education has ensured that the visiting public have a view of the birds which have returned to breed at a protected site in the Trust's Plymbridge Woods on the outskirts of Plymouth. Three chicks hatched and eventually flew the nest.

## VISITS

**Tuesday, 10<sup>th</sup> August. Middleton Hall** As we sat in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Great Hall listening to the story of Middleton Hall's history and renovation by an amazing army of volunteers over the last 24 years the work "incredible" readily springs to mind. This part of the house, restored in 1994, is Georgian in its outward appearance with panelling and staircase re-made by the volunteers and painted in pale green, the original shade discovered under Victorian brown paint. The other ground floor rooms include a library, ballroom, tea room and

kitchen. Francis Willoughby, founder member of the Royal Society, and his family occupied the Hall during the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

The first floor corridor has 24 beautifully worked and most interesting tapestries showing the history of Sutton Coldfield from Saxon times to the present day, while another room is given over to memorabilia of the Peel family and particularly Sir Robert Peel, founder of the modern police force, who lived at Drayton Manor Park.

The delightful grounds contain a large man-made lake and a colourful walled garden and we were able to see evidence of further recent restoration of more ancient buildings.

Tea was tastefully served during our visit and we all felt that Peter Moxon had organised a most interesting and informative afternoon.

Mrs J.L. Scholes.

## **LAKE DISTRICT HOLIDAY Mon. 6<sup>th</sup> to Thurs. 9<sup>th</sup> September**

Day 1. We sped up the M6 in bright sunshine, which lasted all 4 days.

Holker Hall. Clearly a much loved Cavendish family home full of wonderful local craftsmanship. Particular highlights – the hand-stencilled green wall-coverings in the billiard room and the engravings by Nash of Brighton Pavilion. In the grounds, some of us were lucky enough to catch the rainbow in the fountain, and I thought the labyrinth with its standing stones and the slate sundial were unusually striking additions to the splendid parkland with views of the distant hills.

Quaker Tapestry. Fascinating community embroidery, a project celebrating the ideas and experience of the movement since 1652. Extraordinary detail and amazing effects created by the embroiderers.

Day 2. Cartmel Priory and Gatehouse. Our splendid guide Janet informed and entertained us on the journey, telling us a great deal about the history, both social and economic, the geology and natural resources of the Lakes. Her personal interest in the Gatehouse in pretty Cartmel made this an unexpectedly fascinating building. The huge priory church showed that it still very much belongs to the local people and was full of interesting architectural details.

Sizergh Castle. Home to the Strickland family for 700 years, this retained the feel of a fashionable Elizabethan residence, with a remarkable series of oak-panelled rooms, of which the highlight was the panelling of the magnificent Inlaid Chamber, 'among the finest ever made for an English country house'. Again, delightful, largely informal gardens, with unique huge rock garden.

Day 3. Free morning in Grasmere. Some took to the hills or walked round the lake, while others explored the very attractive village, with its craft shops,

hotels and art galleries, and visited the church with the Wordsworth tombs and Dove Cottage, remarkably preserved as it was in the poet's day.

Coniston and Brantwood. The trip in the steam yacht Gondola around Lake Coniston gave us a wonderful view of the hills and Ruskin's house, Brantwood, in its splendid setting above the lake. The house was filled with Ruskin's art, furniture and personal possessions and we had time to walk through some of the gardens he created around the house before the return trip to Coniston in Gondola.

Day 4. Blackwell House. A superb Arts and Crafts house by Baillie Scott, well introduced by the curator. Its fine location above Lake Windermere was a bonus in such good weather. I particularly enjoyed the rowan-berry oak frieze round the remarkable Main Hall, and the peacock wallpaper above. The white drawing-room was superb, again full of carvings of Lakeland birds, berries, leaves, flowers and with a beautiful inglenook, with its extraordinary columns with their intricately carved capitals. I hope the girls who were at school here appreciated this fantastic building.

Kendal, Abbot Hall Gallery and Museum of Lakeland Life. We were lucky to see the Sickert and Lucien Freud exhibitions and we enjoyed the Museum of Lakeland Life, especially the room reconstructions and the recordings of local voices. We had time to visit the parish church, with its exceptional width, space created when Flemish weavers came to start the woollen industry in Kendal.

Our hotel provided us with very good food, comfortable accommodation and a superb location on the lakeside. John, our driver, negotiated all the narrow roads with ease and we are all so grateful to Anne Anderton, ably assisted by Paul, for arranging and leading the holiday in so efficient and effortless a manner, which was of course only achieved by an awful lot of hard work and planning.

Kay Williams.

***Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup> September. Mill Meece Pumping Station.*** 27 members were enthralled by the sheer magnificence and size of the two horizontal steam pumps which supplied Stoke-on-Trent with over 2 million gallons of water each day until they were replaced by electric pumps in 1979. The pumping Station is maintained by a Preservation Trust comprising volunteers who keep the pumps running without any financial grants, depending entirely upon very modest admission fees, donations and the volunteers' time and skill. The Chairman of the Trust and the Chief Engineer gave members an interesting guided tour and afterwards members could wander around the Pumping Station at their leisure to look at the many exhibits and displays.

Additionally members could browse around the Yesteryear Rally of old cars, miniature steam railway engines and traction engines and a variety of

other motors. The sunshine contributed to a very relaxing day for members whether they were mechanically minded or otherwise. We are indebted to Peter Moxon for arranging and leading this visit.

**Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> October. Bridgewater Hall.** The evening was organised with her renowned happy efficiency by Penny Moore. The tone was set by our complimentary programmes on arrival, and our excellent seats in the centre stalls. It was a marvellous evening in the airy and acoustically brilliant concert hall. Mark Elder introduced the programme and also a different seating arrangement for the orchestra, with an even balance of all sections on both sides of the podium. This gave a stereophonic effect to the playing. The concert opened with Rossini's Overture: The Thieving Magpie, played with verve, yet portraying both the comedy and the pathos of the piece: the joyous flightiness of the magpie contrasting with the repeated staccato rhythms of the snare drums presaging the grief-laden march to the scaffold of the wrongly accused servant girl.

The second piece was the well-loved Piano Concerto No. 23 in A by Mozart. The soloist was Paul Lewis whose wonderful lightness of touch, and fine ensemble duet with the wind instruments, brought a magic and poignancy to the concerto, especially in the moving Adagio. The final piece after the interval was Beethoven's Symphony No. 3 in E flat, the 'Eroica' Symphony. Once again the new arrangement of the orchestra gave a new dimension to the symphony – one of which I am sure Beethoven himself would have approved; a truly magnificent climax to a superb evening.

Eunice Mortimer.

**Tuesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> November**

**Back to Back Houses, Hurst Street, Birmingham.**

What a day of contrasts! Having picked their way through the fringes of road-works and building sites and located Hurst Street, members headed for the Bull Ring, Selfridges or the Art Gallery. In the afternoon we were back in the 1840s, 1870s, 1930s and up to 1970s, all at Court 15 (this being the name of the area around which the sole-surviving, and now renovated, back to back houses stand). Our excellent guides led us from the 1930s sweet shop, in and out of the courtyard, the wash house (or brewis) the outdoor toilets (which were arranged to show various stages of increasing sophistication), and up and down the steep and twisting stairs of the dwellings. Most rooms were furnished and we could sit and touch at will and imagine what the cramped and unhygienic lives of the inhabitants must have been like.

The interactive exhibition afforded a mass of detail about Birmingham in general and Court 15 in particular, the families that lived there, the many trades they were engaged in and especially the story of the rescue and

restoration of what had once been the commonest form of working-class housing.

## TALKS

***Monday, 11<sup>th</sup> October.***

***“An Evening With Mee” – talk and films by Gerald Mee.***

Gerald Mee’s presentation of three local newsreel films was well received by a larger than average audience. Some of our members appeared in his compilation of local events, mainly in Leek. There was excellent footage of the lighting of the Millennium Beacon in howling winds on Morridge, which obviously did not deter the Leek lady, in her nineties, who set the fire alight! In contrast were the delightful Leek Walks, with the little girls in their white summer finery and the local bands in accompaniment. The many questions Gerald answered reflected the members’ interest in what he had both told and shown us and people no doubt appreciated what a valuable local collection he has made during his many years of filming.

***Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> November.***

***Dr Nigel Tringham: “There’s more than beer to Burton”***

This talk on the subject of the Victoria County History of Staffordshire opened up a view of a well-known, but often misunderstood, world of scholarship. Dr Tringham is the current editor of books continuing a long series of volumes about different aspects of the history of Staffordshire, mostly taking different regions such as ‘Leek and the Moorlands’ and ‘Burton-upon-Trent’ for exploration. A full account of each region from at least Roman times to the present day is given, every item of information meticulously referenced so that local and family historians have a sound basis on which they can build their own particular village and personal histories. Research is far from being restricted to Victorian times – the basic misunderstanding of the project arises from its origin in the last few years of the reign of Victoria when the Queen gave her royal approval for a project to write a final history of every county in England. Teams have beavered away ever since still using much of the information collected in the first instance by fifty young ladies recruited to fillet the vast pile of ancient records kept in the Public Record Office. Dr Tringham’s lively presentation laid out the joys and the difficulties of the task he and his two colleagues are engaged in. He drew examples from the latest publication on the Burton-upon-Trent area, and announced that the next will be concerned with rural areas of north-west Staffordshire. Finally, he invited local historians with information and research projects relating to this part of the county to contact him with a view to arranging mutual exchanges.



## JANUARY to APRIL 2005 PROGRAMME

### ARRANGEMENTS FOR TRIPS AND MEETINGS

Coaches depart promptly from **SCHOOL STREET**, Newcastle, behind the Swimming Baths. Nearby long-stay parking. Should a member cancel their booking it is regretted that reimbursement is only possible if there is a waiting list. There will be a £2 per cheque handling charge. Members are requested not to find their own replacement. Non-members taking part in coach outings pay an additional £1. The Committee has agreed that with rising numbers it is only fair that members should have priority when booking trips and holidays.

Members are asked to note that it is not possible for the coach to stop at places other than School Street to pick people up or drop them off on the outward or return journeys. The coach will not wait for members who are late, either at School Street or at other pick up points. Members are warned to make careful note of when and where they will be picked up. Anyone missing a coach has no claim on the Association.

Evening meetings take place in the Wade Hall, Medical Institute, Hartshill, starting at 8.00 p.m. The Medical Institute is situated on the A52 next to the Westminster Bank and opposite the "Noah's Ark" Hotel. There is ample free parking around the building and facilities for obtaining coffee and drinks. Please note that the membership subscription entitles members to free entry to evening meetings.

Cheques to be made payable to the **"N. Staffs. Association of NT Members"**. Due to current banking procedure, please note that cheques are not cleared until after an event. Members are asked to write a separate cheque for each event they book.

The Committee does not consider it proper that an event should incur a loss and therefore reserves the right to cancel should there be insufficient support.

**Monday, 17<sup>th</sup> January                      Medical Institute, Hartshill 8.00pm**  
**David Vodden: "Open Air Museums"**

Most of us have probably visited Avoncroft Museum of Buildings or Blists Hill or Beamish; however, the movement to create such museums began not in Britain but in Scandinavia and tonight's talk will explain and illustrate the history of these open-air museums from the beginning to relatively recent ones

such as the Black Country Museum in the Midlands. David Vodden has long been a member of the Walsall NT Association and is a professional historian with a current position as Education Officer for the Black Country Museum so he is well qualified to talk on a subject which has been dear to his heart for many years and on which he has written a book.

**Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> February.**

**MIDDLEPORT POTTERY**

**CAR OUTING Max 40**

Middleport Pottery, which is owned by Messrs Burgess, Dorling and Leigh, is a unique survival of a working commercial pottery that dates back to Victorian times. The building and its processes are virtually unchanged through the 125 years of its existence; the factory tour is quite unlike any other. You will have read how the Dorling family recently bought the Pottery to keep alive its products and ambience.

However, it is a VERY old building with uneven floors and very steep staircases, so sensible shoes please. We will be divided into three groups to allow us to hear our guide's commentary.

Regrettably it is absolutely unsuitable for a visit by a group that includes persons with walking difficulties. Please do not ignore this by saying "I'll manage all right" if you do have difficulty. It is not fair to the others on the tour, to the Dorling family or the Association.

We meet at the Pottery at 9.45 a.m. for a prompt start to the tours at 10 a.m.

Directions will be sent with acknowledgment of booking.

The tour will take about 1 hour and 15 minutes, and at its conclusion we partake of coffee and biscuits.

Time: Please meet at the Pottery at 9.45 a.m.

Cost: £6 which includes price of tour and coffee and biscuits.

Apply to: Dr Alun Davies, 15 Berne Avenue, Newcastle ST5 2QJ

Tel: 611711 enclosing SAE. Booking closes February 1<sup>st</sup>.

**Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> March AN EVENING AT THE MUSEUM 7.30 - 9.30pm**  
**POTTERIES MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY**

For a special treat we have arranged an evening meeting at the Museum which has agreed to open for a private visit for us. We shall have illustrated talks by two curators, in the Lecture Theatre, on the Art and Costume collections then go to the relevant galleries to view some of the items. We often take for granted the treasures we have on our own doorsteps and this evening will be a chance to appreciate some of these as well as having the benefit of expert commentary on some of the collections. The evening will finish with tea or coffee and home-made cakes.

It will be necessary to make a modest charge to cover some of the costs of the special opening and the time of the curators.

Tickets £7.50 each Please apply to Mrs. A. Anderton, 14, Berne Avenue, Newcastle, Staffs. ST5 2QJ enclosing SAE

**Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> March**

**Max 50**

**A DAY IN SHEFFIELD – CUTLERS’ HALL, MILLENNIUM GALLERIES & WINTER GARDENS**

Cutlers’ Hall spectacular building dates from 1832. Steeped in Sheffield history, home to the Cutlers’ Livery Company, host to the annual Cutlers’ Feast, it houses a superb collection of silver. After coffee and biscuits on arrival, we shall have a guided tour of the Hall (1¼ hrs approx.)



Members are then free to visit the Millennium Galleries (with café) an outstanding venue for art and design, housing Sheffield’s metalwork gallery and the Ruskin Gallery. It is linked to the Winter Garden, the largest temperate glasshouse in any European city centre. Both are about 5 minutes walk from Cutlers’ Hall. Adjacent to the Millennium Galleries, and above the Central Library, is Graves Art Gallery which exhibits the best of twentieth century European Art. N.B. Free admission to all 3, but touring exhibition changes possible.

Depart: 9.00 a.m. School Street. Return 6 p.m. approx.

Cost: £14 Price includes coach, gratuities, coffee and tour of Cutlers’ Hall.

Apply to: Mrs M. Malcolm, 17 Beresford Crescent, Newcastle. ST5 3RG Tel: 613451 enclosing SAE.

Booking closes February 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Wednesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March. 8.00 p.m. The Medical Institute, Hartshill  
Dr Philip Morgan: “The Crackpot Antics of the National Trust”.**

How should we regard the work of the National Trust after little more than a century? The Trust says “Heritage is more than bricks and mortar, paint and canvas; it is how each generation discovers fresh meaning and value through interacting with these physical things”. However, some critics have called the Trust’s work “a vast system of indoor relief for the aristocracy” and a baleful influence on the conservation of historic buildings. Does “renovation” falsify the original and produce mere imitation?

Dr Philip Morgan will take a provocative and cheeky look at the work of the Trust. Come and be outraged or have your dark suspicions confirmed!

## FOR YOUR DIARY

May 10<sup>th</sup>

A.G.M.

June 8<sup>th</sup>

Consall Hall Gardens (car).

July 6<sup>th</sup>

Grimsthorpe Castle & Easton Neston Garden.

