

North Staffordshire National Trust Association

Newsletter No. 132

Autumn 2025

www.northstaffsnt.org.uk



Committee getting older: New blood needed!

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 NT Assoc". 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.

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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!)

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North Staffordshire National Trust Association

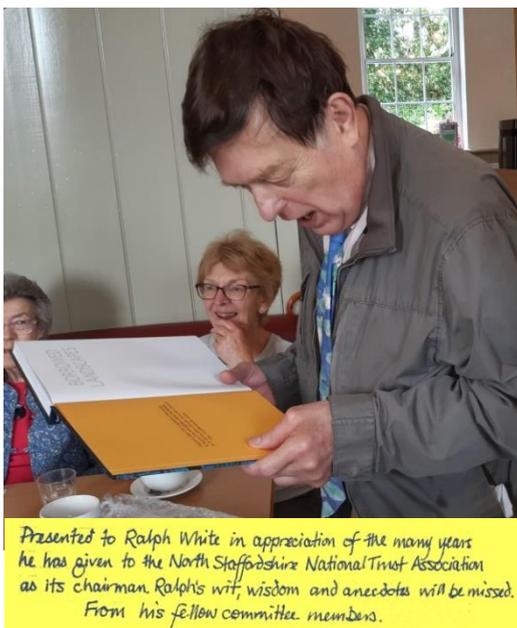
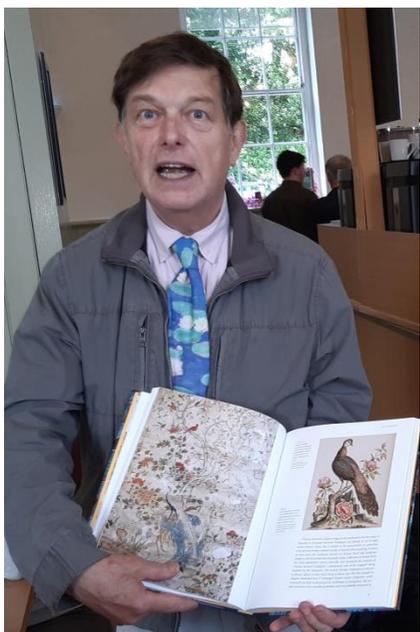
Newsletter No. 132 Autumn 2025 Programme

Change of Chair

We say farewell to Ralph White as Chair of the Association (although hopefully we will still see him as a member) as, after over 12 years at the helm, he has now resigned from the post. Our membership and committees in particular, past and present, owe him a great debt of gratitude for all the hard work and knowledge he has brought to the Association.

We were able to take the opportunity of the visit to the Japanese Garden at Tatton Park to present Ralph with a souvenir of his time in post in the form of a delightful discourse on, appropriately, Japanese gardens.





Welcome to our new chair, Bob Winter, who we see above executing his first official duty in the presentation to Ralph. Bob joined NSNTA in 2011 and was elected onto the Committee in 2012 where he has been active in organising events and supporting talks over the years. He opens by making the following tribute to Ralph:

“After serving as Chair of the Association over a period of 12 years, Ralph has finally decided to stand down.

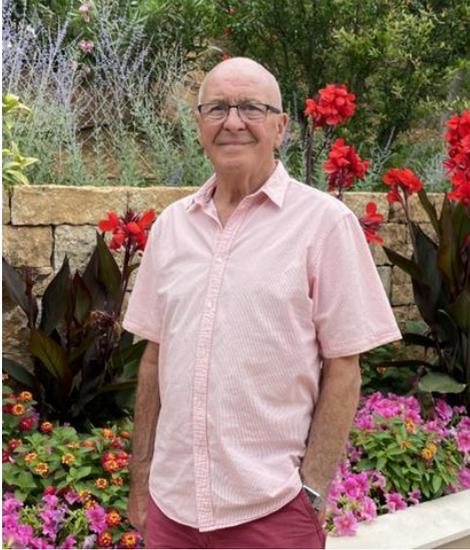
Ralph has worked hard in taking the Association into the heart of the National Trust organisation. They now know so much more about us and the great work we do in supporting the local National Trust properties, as well as providing interesting social visits and events for our members. To his credit, he has also shared in the actual organising of events.

We shall miss Ralph’s ready wit and his style of chairing the speaker evenings at the Wade Centre.

In all weathers and road conditions, Ralph has commuted to the Potteries from his home in Wolverhampton, to carry out his duties as our Chairman.

Thank you Ralph, but please stay in touch and support the Association whenever the occasion arises.”

A Note from The New Chair



What a wonderful start to the summer. There may be drought conditions, but as an association, we have enjoyed some great visits. The visit to Blists Hill Open Air Museum went really well, as did the social event at Biddulph Grange on May Day; the scones were delicious! Also, how fortunate were we in dodging the rain on our visit to the wonderful Japanese Garden at Tatton Park.

I would like to welcome two new members to the committee. Helen Mansell who is the person behind the great events that we enjoy. Also Anthea Bond who, as the Speaker Secretary, keeps finding interesting speakers to entertain us. In the Autumn period we

have a coach trip and several car visits.

From experience, I can assure you that organising visits by our planning volunteers take time and a lot of effort, so I ask you to please do your part by joining in and giving your support.

Finally, the Christmas Lunch - yes it does creep up on us! We are again holding the event at the Double Tree Hotel, so please give us your support and make the event a great success.

Best Wishes

Bob

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.

### **Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> August: Car Trip: Halfpenny Green Vineyard.**

If this reaches you in time please check with Ralph for cancellations.

### **Monday 8<sup>th</sup> September: Car Trip: Wollerton Old Hall Garden, Market Drayton .**

There are still spaces available on this trip, but please book asap so numbers can be confirmed for catering.



Monty Don, who filmed here recently, says it is one of his favourite gardens in the world, and it's on our doorstep.

The site is an ancient one, but the three acre garden is modern and formal, featuring contrasting "rooms". Colour, form and scale have been used cleverly to evoke contrasting moods of calm or excitement.

The borders are richly planted with perennials growing in what is called "controlled exuberance"! The garden is renowned for salvias, clematis and roses. I would mention the absolutely gigantic dahlias.

Programme of visit.

Please park in the field opposite the entrance and meet in the tearoom at 11.am where tea and coffee will be served.



A tour of the gardens by Mr. Jenkins, the joint owner, will begin at 11.30 until about 12.45. Lunch, included in the cost of the day, will then be served in the Tearoom (See booking form for choices).

There will then be free time for you to explore the gardens at leisure and visit the excellent plant sales area.

At 2.45-3pm home-made cake and refreshments will be served in the Tearoom. If you have to leave earlier, your cake can be boxed.

This is an exclusive opening for us so the tea room will be catering for our prearranged requirements. This means that the day is all inclusive. The owners don't allow picnicking in the garden and it won't be possible to have sandwiches in the field with ad hoc purchases from the tea room.

Cost of event £32.00 pp (Non-members £33.00). Please apply to Ralph White with booking form, cheque and SAE. Enquiries: [Ralph@ralphwhitedesign.com](mailto:Ralph@ralphwhitedesign.com)

## **Monday 12<sup>th</sup> - Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> September: Heritage Open Days.**

See the item on page 12 for more information on Heritage Open Days and the activities brought to you by the National Trust but arranged by local organisations, mainly on the theme of Architecture.

See [heritageopendays.org.uk](http://heritageopendays.org.uk), What's on? and complete the search criteria for a list of events in local or other areas as required. See also [trenthamheritage.org.uk](http://trenthamheritage.org.uk) for events covered by the Trentham Heritage Project.

Note some events need to be booked in advance, others not.

## **Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> September: Talk: Shaun Farrelly: James Brindley - the father of British canal engineering.**

Until the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, transport was a difficult and expensive undertaking. James Brindley promoted vast civil engineering projects of canal construction.

## **Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> September: Social: Lunch at The Hand and Trumpet, Betley.**

Are you free for lunch on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> September? Come and join us at the Hand and Trumpet, Betley CW3 9BJ at 12.00 for 12.30 for a chat, a drink and a bite to eat. Meet old friends or make new ones in a relaxed and easy atmosphere. No big long table, just small easy to join tables in a lovely place with good food and good company.

Order on the day from an extensive menu of light bites, main meals and puddings. Give it a try and enjoy! There is no charge for members. Guests will be welcomed and

will be invited to make a small donation to our funds. Settle your bill with the pub before you leave of course!

Please contact Nicky Adams to reserve your place/s: 07851 525933, rjnadams@btinternet.com, or 79 Whitmore Road, Newcastle ST5 3LZ. As usual, if you would like a lift, let me know and I'll do my best to find one for you, and likewise please tell me if you might be able to offer someone a lift to Betley.

## **Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> October: Talk: Rob Pointon: All the Queen's Horses and All the King's Men.**

Rob Pointon is a local professional artist. Between 2020-2024 he was the Artist in Residence with the Household Cavalry and later the Household Division. This position gave unique access for him to paint live at key historical events in our country's history; the Platinum Jubilee, the Lying in State and Funeral of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the Coronation of King Charles III. Rob will talk through this episode in relation to the rest of his career as a street painter.

Rob's books and calendars will be on sale at the talk.

## **Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> October: Car Trip: The Keele Observatory.**

Have you ever wished to know more about the night sky? Then join us on this very interesting guided visit.

Keele Observatory is a hidden gem for stargazers and science lovers alike, located on campus at Keele University. Founded in 1962, it houses a historic 31cm refracting telescope dating back to 1874, alongside a more modern 60cm reflector used for research. We might even see the International Space Station, which orbits the earth every 90 minutes!



Arrive at the Observatory for a 7.30pm start.

Cost; £4 (non-members £5)

Please apply to Bob Winter enclosing booking form, a cheque and SAE.

Enquiries Tel 01782 642942, 07783321209, robert.winter14@btinternet.com

## Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November: Car Trip: Repeat visit to Stafford History Centre.

Following the sell-out car trip to The Staffordshire History Centre last April we have decided to run the visit again as so many members were left disappointed and put on a waiting list. Thanks to a massive grant from the National Heritage Lottery Fund, Staffordshire has a remarkable new history centre in Stafford in Eastgate Street, (ST16 2NQ). The county's archive and heritage collections are nationally important and stretch back over a thousand years. We will tour the building with one of their specialist staff who will tell us about the work of the service and showcase the treasures in the new displays. There will also be the chance of a glimpse behind the scenes and the opportunity to ask questions over a hot drink after the tour which will last around 90 minutes.

**Every member who wishes to join us in November will need to apply in the usual way: priority will be given to those on the waiting list from last time but they will need to re-apply. As numbers are restricted it is advisable to apply as soon as possible.**

We will meet at 1:55pm at the main entrance which can be accessed from either Eastgate Street (via the arch) or North Walls (via the gates). Information about parking will be given when booking is confirmed. If anyone has a Blue Badge, I can provide additional information nearer the date. Please let me know if you have any mobility issues as part of the tour includes stairs.

Cost: £7.50 (non-members £8.50) including tea/coffee and the usual donation to the National Trust.

Please apply to Rose Wheat, enclosing application form, cheque made payable to the North Staffs NT Association and an SAE. Enquiries: [rosewheat@virginmedia.com](mailto:rosewheat@virginmedia.com) or 01782 616113.

## Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> November: Talk: Steve Booth: Staffordshire and the coming of the Tudors in 1485.

Steve is one of our most popular speakers, previous talks have included the Blitz in the Potteries and the Dukes and Duchesses of Sutherland.

## Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December: Christmas Lunch at Double Tree.

Our Christmas lunch will be at the Double Tree by Hilton Hotel, Festival Park, ST1 5BQ from 12.00 for lunch at 1.0pm

Last year the local location with its easy parking, friendly, efficient staff, and good food proved to be very popular. We have again booked the Josiah Wedgwood Suite with its own bar. Cost has been held at £35pp for a 3 course Christmas lunch, mince pies and coffee. (See the attached Menu below)

We require menu choices prior to November 17<sup>th</sup> together with the booking form and your cheque made out to North Staffs N.T Association with an SAE, or email address, to Marion Lycett and Phil Alcock, Millstone House, Bagnall, Staffs Moorlands ST9 9JR at your earliest convenience.

We hope to welcome as many members as possible to enjoy meeting friends and sharing memories of the year's activities. If you would like to invite guests they are welcome at a cost of £37 pp.

We are hoping to be entertained after lunch by the New Tonic Singers, a duo and their piano accompanist. This is to be confirmed.

For further information contact: marionlycett@hotmail.com, 07481817048 or phil.alcock@yahoo.co.uk, 07814 028828.

## **Christmas Party Menu 2025**

*The menu does state any allergens directly within these meals. However, please know we cannot guarantee they do not contain traces due to the environment the food is prepared in.*

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### **Starter**

**Homemade vegetable soup** *with Garlic Croutons*

Dairy Free, Gluten Free, Vegan, Vegetarian

**Prawn & Tomato Cocktail** *served with Shredded Lettuce & Marie Rose Sauce*

Gluten Free

**Pressed Chicken & Apricot Terrine** *Served with Spiced Cranberry Chutney & Dressed Leaves*

### **Main Course**

**Roasted Turkey Breast** *Served with Honey Glazed Parsnips, Roasted Carrots, Brussel Sprouts, Roast Potatoes, Pigs in Blankets & Pouring Gravy*

Dairy Adaptable, Gluten Adaptable

**Slow Cooked Beef Pie** *Served with Baby Onions, Mushrooms, Grain Mustard Mash, Roasted Carrots & Parsnips*

**Roasted Salmon Fillet** *Served with New Potatoes, Seasonal Greens & Hollandaise*

Dairy Adaptable, Gluten Adaptable, Pescetarian

**Pumpkin and Sage Risotto** *Served with Crispy Sage and Mozzarella Fritters*

Vegan, Vegetarian

### **Dessert**

**Traditional Christmas Pudding** *Served with Brandy Sauce*

**Chocolate Torte** *Served with Kirsch Cherries*

Gluten Free, Vegan, Vegetarian

**Winter Fruit Eton Mess**

Gluten Free

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## *Heritage Open Days*

Heritage Open Days are brought to you by the National Trust, supported by players of People's Postcode Lottery and delivered locally by a large range of organisations, including civic societies, heritage organisations and local councils, community champions and volunteers.

Every September thousands of volunteers across England organise events to celebrate our fantastic history and culture. It's your chance to see hidden places and try out new experiences. And it's all completely free!

This year's festival is taking place 12<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> September and the chosen theme for 2025 is Architecture.

Several members of this Association are part of the Trentham Heritage Project (<https://trenthamheritage.org.uk/>) and, since 2016 we have been celebrating Trentham's history by holding talks, displays and guided walks, in partnership with Trentham Parish church, as part of the Heritage Open Days festival.

This year the architecture theme allows us to celebrate the work of the renowned architect Charles Barry, probably most famous for designing The Palace of Westminster. He was commissioned by the 2nd Duke and Duchess of Sutherland to remodel Trentham Hall into a palatial Italianate residence befitting their status as the richest family in the country. A special feature will be the display of some of Barry's plans and drawings, which have not been on public display since they were purchased in the 1990s. On Friday 12<sup>th</sup> September there will be a talk at Trentham Church 19:00 – 21:00 entitled ***Charles Barry and his Grand Designs for Trentham***

On Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> September Trentham Church 11:00 - 16:00 will be open to welcome visitors. Displays in the vestry under the title ***Trentham and its Architects – the men behind the bricks and mortar*** will show the work of Charles Barry and other noteworthy architects working in Trentham in the 1800s. Charles Heathcote Tatham designed the Sutherland Mausoleum, the only Grade 1 listed building in the city. Thomas Roberts, the estate surveyor, designed cottages for tenants plus other striking local buildings. And George Devey, an influential London architect, designed several distinctive buildings for the Duke.

Other Heritage Open Day events can be discovered on their website <https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/whats-on.html>

*Cynthia Dumbelton, Marilyn Vigurs, Ann George, Katie Forrest-Hay, Jenny Latham, Sarah Akhtar.*

## *Other events that might interest you*

The following events are not NSNTA organised or sponsored events but are of a common interest shared by many members:

Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> August 1:30pm: Arts Society film show at the Wade Conference Centre celebrating the centenaries of the births of Arthur Berry and John Wain in Stoke-on-Trent.

Friday 12<sup>th</sup> / Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> September: talk and display at Trentham Church featuring Charles Barry and his involvement with Trentham – see the Heritage Open Days item on page 12 for more information.

## *A Note from your new Programme Coordinator*

Dear members,

Those of you who were not present at the AGM on 20<sup>th</sup> May might not be aware that Marion Lycett - our Programme Coordinator of 6 years, has stepped down from the post and has handed the baton to me.

Marion has served the Group most excellently, being very proactive in the role, working tirelessly and bringing so many programmes of events before us. Luckily, Marion is remaining as a Committee member and I give her my sincere thanks for all the time and effort she has contributed over the years, and continues to contribute.

While I shall do my utmost to continue Marion's good work, in order that a wide and varied selection of activities can be arranged, I invite YOU, dear member, to contact me with your ideas and suggestions. In addition, our current team of volunteers need help with organising outings and trips and so I appeal to you to PLEASE offer a helping hand so that we can continue providing a programme of events.

Several members already know me and I hope that I'll meet more very soon. Please do not hesitate to get in touch with me, (contact details on the inside of this Newsletter's back cover) as your contributions towards planning or running activities will surely be appreciated. I look forward to hearing from you and being able to put together an interesting selection of treats.

*Helen Mansell*

## *Have Your Say!*

We remind you that the committee are always anxious to know members' views on the activities of the NSNTA – comments or suggestion on the programme always welcome.

## *Membership*

We have pleasure in announcing and welcoming the following who has joined since we last welcomed new members: Suzanne Simpson. Current membership is 219.

**NT Membership Discount** A reminder that a 25% discount on the general National Trust membership subscription is available to eligible members: those over 60 who have been members for over three years. Ring 0344 800 1895 to request it before your next subscription is due.

## *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.

## *Reviews of Recent Events*

Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> April: Car Trip: Staffordshire History Centre, Stafford.



This amazing new building opened in November 2024 after extensive work, partly funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund with a grant of almost five million pounds.

There are three parts. The William Salt Library has been restored, keeping the Georgian windows facing Eastgate Street. William Salt was a banker before Lloyds. He collected books, particularly those about the people of Stafford. The 1580s building was restored in 1733 with various successful tradespeople and professionals living there as tenants. The library was in the house from 1918 to the start of Covid in 2020. It took 3 months to move

the books, manuscripts and newspapers and now the collection is being prepared for a move to the new air-conditioned strong room in the main building.

Since the recent renovation, the elegant Georgian bay window at the back of William Salt's house, dated 1810, faces the glass wall of the county museum which is a bright exhibition space for displays and exhibitions. The fabric items are changed every 3 months to avoid damage. During the building preparations, small pieces were found of Anglo-Saxon pottery almost 1500 years old. We saw a document with gall ink on sheep parchment dated 1004, kept in careful conditions but easily accessible for museum visitors.

The paper archives are not counted but they are measured by the metres of shelf space they take. They are on 4 floors with deep new foundations. We also saw the new research room and the conservation room.

Curator Sarah English gave us interesting details of the 3 main areas. There are 21 curators/archivists. Two men from the architects' office were there at the same time as us, they were taking final photos of this huge project.

We saw the Collections Centre in Weston Road, Stafford in April 2023, and now thanks go to Rose Wheat again for organising this interesting visit to the centre of Stafford for the Staffordshire History Centre.

*Anthea Bond.*

## Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> April: Talk: Danny Wells: Gothic Revival church buildings in Staffordshire.

Danny is a social history enthusiast; he talked about the work of Augustus Pugin, William Morris, John Ruskin, Giles Gilbert Scott, Richard Norman Shaw and others.

The Gothic period started in 1140 in north-west France and continued over 4 centuries. The Gothic Revival period started in the 1750s; in the 1800s it was the commonest architectural style and it continued in the mid-Victorian period. There were big houses, churches and garden follies.

Pugin lived only 40 years, 1812-1852, he was a leading figure in the Gothic Revival period, producing 100 buildings, 8 books and stained glass. When he was in his 20s, he worked with Charles Barry and a team, including Herbert Minton, on the Palace of Westminster. He worked on St. Giles' church in Cheadle, well described by the priest Michael Fisher as "Pugin's gem". He used local materials and the skills of local people, including tiles by Minton. It was consecrated in 1846 with 10 bishops attending.

Churches in Alton, Denstone, Hoar Cross, Ilam, Sheen, and Uttoxeter were shown.

Giles Gilbert Scott was praised. When he was 21, he won the competition to design an Anglican cathedral in Liverpool and he was involved in this building for the rest of his life. 25 other cathedrals were influenced by him, 800 churches..... and the red phone box.

In the Diocese of Lichfield, there were 153 new churches between 1840 and 1860 with a major restoration of St. Edward's church in Leek. All Saints church opened in 1887. William Morris spent time in Leek 1875-1878 with his friend and colleague Thomas Wardle, studying designs and colours. His wife Elizabeth Morris set up the Leek Embroiderers Guild.

Other artists attracted to Staffordshire included Richard Norman Shaw, designer of Cragside, which we visited in Northumbria in 2023.

Danny Wells gave us an excellent account of the buildings in the Gothic Revival style in Staffordshire as well as other famous examples. Most of them were churches and cathedrals. I chose this talk from Danny's list as the meeting was in the week before Easter, Holy Week, the most important time in the Christian calendar.

*Anthea Bond.*

## Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> April: Walk: Little Moreton Hall and Scholar Green.



The sun was shining and the birds were singing as we set off on our Sunday morning stroll from Little Moreton Hall. Three hours, nearly five miles and eight stiles later, we returned. A pleasant walk across fields, along the canal admiring Ramsdell Hall and its unique railings as we passed by, bluebells in the woods, the impressive All Saints' Church in the parish of Odd Rode, friendly horses and inquisitive

lambs. Maybe a bit too far for some of us, but all bar one (who turned back at the canal) made it round.

The roasted pepper and tomato soup in the garden at Little Moreton Hall was popular, and can be highly recommended, especially if you have earned it as we did!

*Nicky Adams.*



## Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> May: Social Event at Biddulph Grange.

Following last year's social event at Biddulph Grange we met once again for another excellent cream tea with scones baked in the Grange's own kitchen (although unfortunately some at the end of the queue were unlucky). This was an opportunity for members to see the climatically-controlled display cabinet for which we had donated funds, and to catch up with old friends, and of course to enjoy the beautiful gardens in which the Grange is situated.



We are pleased to continue our association with Biddulph Grange, the most significant National Trust property in our area.

Thanks are due to Chairman Ralph for organising this enjoyable event.

## Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> May: Car Trip: Blists Hill, Open Air Museum.

On a cloudy and rather chilly morning we were greeted by Police Constable Jarrett, complete with helmet and truncheon, who welcomed us all individually to Blists Hill and in a booming voice gave us an introductory talk to the open air museum. We were then taken back in time on a guided tour by an enthusiastic actress, dressed in Victorian clothes, to a 19<sup>th</sup> century small town which has been lovingly recreated on a former industrial site.



Blists Hill is not a real town. It is a museum set in over 50 acres of land where iron was once smelted, coal and clay were mined and where bricks and roofing tiles were made. The remains of those industries can still be found on site including blast furnaces and a pit shaft but in the same landscape a small industrial town has been built. Many of the buildings have been moved from other sites and re-erected. The shops were staffed by actors in period dress and items could be purchased using Victorian coins obtained from the bank. The ravages of inflation were brought home when £10 in 1971 could buy a flat cap for 5s2d (26p) in 1900 for sale in the drapers and outfitters and at the sweet shop one could indulge in old favourites such as pear



drops and humbugs for 4p for 4ozs. The pharmacy sold medicines containing opium to be given to teething babies and to control coughing and diarrhoea as well as offering tooth extractions!



Many of us enjoyed lunch bought from the fish and chip shop which we ate in The New Inn, a traditional pub, whilst joining in a piano sing song in front of a roaring open fire. The meal was wrapped in newspaper printed at the Printer and Stationer's shop on a 19<sup>th</sup> century press. Rowland Smitheman's Photographer's Studio tempted six of us to dress in Victorian clothes and pose for a group photograph as can be seen on the front of this Newsletter.

Many working class families kept pigs which were not just for food; their fat was rendered down and made into tallow candles which were used underground in the mining industry as well as in homes. Candles are still produced at Thomas Trevor's Candle Factory and Tamworth pigs are kept in a sty.

The industrial side of the site is still in evidence. The iron smelted in the blast furnaces was made into wrought iron at G. R. Morton's ironworks which was then exported to factories making chains, nails and other small metal tools. There is still a resident blacksmith forging wrought iron. The Shropshire Union canal flows through the site and one of the wonders of the age was the Hay Inclined Plane, completed in 1793, connecting it to the Coalport Canal to transport coal around the Ironbridge Gorge.



Many thanks to Marion and Phil for organising such an interesting and varied day out.

*Jane Mayer*

**Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> May: AGM and Talk: Joe Perry: 'Reginald Mitchell'**

**Draft Minutes of the 45<sup>th</sup> A.G.M at the North Staffs Conference Centre May 2025**

1. 76 members attended the A.G.M and there were 9 apologies.
2. Chairman's Report: Ralph announced that he would be standing down as Chairman after more than 12 years. It was disappointing that over this time the

membership had fallen from about 400 to 220 members. Ralph suggested various ideas to promote the Association and reverse the decline, including encouraging members to tell their friends and relatives about our interesting and varied activities. He also outlined the current initiatives of the Trust to strengthen the links between themselves and all the supporting Associations. Finally he thanked all the committee members, past and present, for all their hard work, and particularly mentioned John Spriggs for producing the excellent Newsletter, and Marion Lycett for her sterling work in planning and organising events and trips.

3. The Minutes of the 44<sup>th</sup> A.G.M were accepted as a true record of the Meeting.

4. Secretary's Report: Richard wishes to record his personal thanks to Ralph for his leadership, enthusiasm and guidance over many years. Membership numbers are now 220, down from 240 this time last year. In the last year there were 19 different events, including 7 varied talks, the A.G.M, 1 walk, 6 car outings, 1 coach trip, 2 social events and a 4 day holiday to South Wales. Car sharing arrangements are starting to work well since we are tending to offer fewer coach trips due to increasing costs of coach hire. Thanks are offered to many people for the success of our programme, but especially to Marion for co-ordinating everything, Anthea for arranging the talks, and John for the Newsletter and the Website.

5. Treasurer's Report: Huw presented the Accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2025 which showed a deficit of just under £6,000, mainly due to Donations to Biddulph Grange, amounting to £7,000. The finances are still fairly strong with Reserves just under £10,000. James Scott of Hardings, Chartered Accountants was thanked for independently examining the Accounts, which were then officially adopted by the Meeting.

6. Subscriptions: The Meeting agreed to keep the level of subscriptions unchanged.

7. Approvals for Re-election: The Meeting agreed to waive the requirement to stand down after 5 years as per our Constitution.

8. Elections of Officers and Committee: Bob Winter was proposed and seconded as Chairman and was duly elected by a show of hands. Helen Mansell and Anthea Bond were proposed and seconded to join the Committee and were duly elected by a show of hands. The following were put forward for re-election and were duly elected: Secretary: Richard Adams, Treasurer: Huw Davies, Committee: Phil Alcock, Cynthia Dumbelton, Marion Lycett, Jane Mayer, John Pedrazzini, John Spriggs, Sue Till.

9. A.O.B : On behalf of the Meeting Richard Mayer thanked the committee for their hard work. The new Chairman, Bob Winter, likewise thanked Ralph for his leadership over many years.

The meeting closed at 7.45 pm and was followed by the Talk.

**North Staffs National Trust Association****Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025**

2024/2025

2023/2024

|                                                       | £    | £            | £    | £            |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------|--------------|------|--------------|
| <b>Income</b>                                         |      |              |      |              |
| Members' Subscriptions                                | 2390 |              | 2563 |              |
| Donations                                             | 135  |              | 50   |              |
| Surplus on Trips and Events                           | 587  |              | 2039 |              |
| Bank Interest                                         | 213  |              | 152  |              |
|                                                       |      | 3325         |      | 4811         |
| <b>Expenditure</b>                                    |      |              |      |              |
| Talks (incl Venue Hire )                              | 1638 |              | 1840 |              |
| Newsletter Costs                                      | 562  |              | 515  |              |
| Postage and Officers' Expenses                        | 48   |              | 610  |              |
| Donations Mompesson House                             | 0    |              | 350  |              |
| Biddulph Grange                                       | 7000 |              | 0    |              |
|                                                       |      | 9248         |      | 3315         |
| <b>Net Deficit/Surplus for the year</b>               |      | <u>-5923</u> |      | <u>-496</u>  |
| <b>Balance Sheet as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025</b> |      |              |      |              |
| <b>Assets</b>                                         |      |              |      |              |
| Bank Balance                                          |      | 15618        |      | 15869        |
| Payments in Advance                                   |      | 150          |      | 0            |
|                                                       |      | 15766        |      | 15869        |
| <b>Liabilities</b>                                    |      |              |      |              |
| Receipts in Advance                                   |      | 5820         |      | 0            |
| <b>Total Net Assets</b>                               |      | <u>9946</u>  |      | <u>15869</u> |
| <b>Represented by :</b>                               |      |              |      |              |
| <b>Reserves</b>                                       |      |              |      |              |
| Reserves brought forward                              |      | 15869        |      | 14375        |
| Deficit/Surplus for the year                          |      | -5923        |      | -496         |
| <b>Total Reserves</b>                                 |      | <u>9946</u>  |      | <u>15869</u> |

R White—Chairman

H Davies—Treasurer

I have examined the accounts set out above and in my opinion they are in accordance with the records produced to me and properly reflect the financial affairs and position of the Association.

J. Scott FCCA (Hon Examiner)

Hardings Chartered Accountants, 6, Marsh Parade, Newcastle under Lyme

## Talk by Joseph Perry: Reginald Mitchell and the Tale of Spitfire RW388

Joe gave us another fascinating account from his duties as curator of local history in the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery. The talk was in the same month as the celebration of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day, the same year as the making of our Spitfire and 130 years exactly since the birth of the designer, Reginald Mitchell. We heard about his career, the development of the Spitfire and the history of RW388, the plane in our local museum.

Reginald Mitchell was born in Kidsgrove, the eldest of 5 children, on 20<sup>th</sup> May 1895. On moving to Longton, Reginald attended the junior school there, then Hanley High School. He was good at sport and maths and he was very keen on aeroplanes, making his own toys and aircraft in the garden shed. On leaving school, he was an apprentice at a locomotive manufacturer in Fenton and attended evening classes in engineering and advanced maths in Longton.

He went on to work at Supermarine Engineering in Southampton, they chose employees with experience of locomotive manufacture. During WWI, this was considered a protected occupation, so Mitchell did not serve in the military. By 1920, he was the chief engineer at Supermarine and he was involved in the design of 24 different aircraft between 1920 and 1936.

The Schneider Trophy was awarded by competition, beginning before WWI and resuming afterwards. It started for sea planes with wooden bodies and canvas coverings. Sea Lion II, designed by Mitchell, won the trophy in 1921 and again in 1927 when it was a light metal alloy monoplane. There were further wins, by 1931 there was a Rolls Royce engine capable of reaching 407 mph. It showed Mitchell was a good designer, engineer, team leader and manager, he was awarded a CBE.

The RAF put out specifications for an open cockpit monoplane capable of 250 mph and gave it the name "Spitfire", 300 were ordered. Mitchell won his pilot's licence in 1934 and made his maiden flight in the Spitfire in 1936.

Sadly, Mitchell developed cancer and died in 1937, aged only 42, so he did not see the success of the Spitfire in WWII. 20,000 Spitfires were built by 1946, they were all hand made with various modifications and improvements. RW388 in the Potteries' Museum was made in 1945 in Castle Bromwich, a late model with clipped wings and a 4-bladed propeller. It had a Packard Merlin engine made in America.

In November 1945, RW388 had a forced landing in bad weather in Germany. It was returned to England for repair but crashed again soon after take-off in 1952 in Hampshire.



The RAF gave RW388 to the city of Stoke-on-Trent in 1972; it was housed in a large greenhouse opposite the Potteries Museum and moved into the museum in 1986. In 2018, there was restoration at Rochester airport with some replica components and new paint. In 2021, it was moved to the new gallery at the museum and reassembled after the journey by a team from RAF Cosford.

Many thanks to Joe Perry for such an interesting talk in the month of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day.

*Anthea Bond.*

### Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> June: Car Trip: Tatton Park Japanese Garden.

As I have always loved the idea of the Japanese Garden I was really looking forward to this trip organised by Phil and Marion. We arrived in the rain, so donning our coats, we set off with 40 other National Trust members. With four groups ready, and with



staggered times, we were introduced to our very knowledgeable experts. Our group was the last to leave, and as luck would have it the rain stopped and

blue skies appeared.



Through the gate we saw a beautiful pool decked in waterlilies and surrounded by flag Iris. A family of ducks and ducklings were swimming around, which were so cute. My first impression was the greenness of the trees, bushes and moss, all which shone after the rain. The paths were a bit slippery and there were many steps to negotiate, as they meandered through the gardens. Many a helping



hand was offered to those who struggled a bit!

We arrived at the sacred gateway which led to the shrine. Our guide told us of the protocol used on entering this beautiful, cedar built building lovingly erected when the gardens were built. On we went over the hump back bridge, called the eye because looking back it reflected perfectly in the water as an eye. Next the zigzag bridge, which was called the Devil bridge, the waiting area came next, a thatched cover where one would have been prepared by washing face and hands for the Tea Ceremony in the next building.



The entire garden was beautifully maintained and towards the end of our visit we even passed a small mound called Mount Fuji. It was all the moss, the large rocks expertly placed for maximum effect, and the trees, with the water pools, and small streams babbling along which made it such an exceptional garden for me. The only thing that I didn't like was the noise of all the aircraft from Manchester Airport, as the gardens were under their flight path, but a small price to pay for such a delightful visit.

On our way back for the presentation of a gift from the committee for Ralph for his 12 years' service, the heavens opened once more, and down came the rain. After a rest we all disbanded, but I must just mention all the organisation and hard work done by Phil Alcock and Marion Lycett was much appreciated.

*Julia Davies.*

## Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> July: Coach Trip: Kelmarsh Hall and Gardens, Northants.

On a warm, sunny Tuesday in July a brand new coach met us in Newcastle and we set off on a swift, trouble-free journey to Northamptonshire.

On arrival at Kelmarsh Hall we were welcomed by a friendly guide and served with morning ref-refreshments (noting the Staffordshire tableware!) in a prettily-decorated dining room.

Entering the first room of the Hall we were greatly impressed by its homely atmosphere



and felt this was a house we could live in!.....comfy furniture with cosy cushions, flower arrangements, soft colours decorating the walls...even a basket of books with an invitation to sit awhile and read. This room was a library and the back of the entrance door had book spines attached so that when closed it blended in with the adjacent shelves.....a very clever idea, I thought!



We continued through the building noting this same relaxed atmosphere and were helped in our knowledge-gathering by helpful, approachable guides...one in each room.

The current decor of Kelmarsh Hall was the inspiration of a previous resident, Nancy Lancaster, whose interest in the style of interior design in the 1920s was obvious

for all to see. She was a great socialite, entertaining many wealthy guests and, unusually for the era, she commissioned the provision of en-suite bathrooms for her guests. Her own bedroom was beautifully decorated with luxurious furnishing, drapes etc. and the doors to the en-suite facilities were mirrored giving the dressing a feeling of light and space.



Every room had ornaments displayed on mantelshelves and tables, personal items, and of course a fully laid table in the dining room where yet again many of us tried to resist the temptation to turn the plates over to see whether they also were manufactured in Stoke on Trent!....(they were!)



Then it was on to the “Downstairs “ part of the Hall where we explored several rooms where servants lived, slept and served the family ...cooking, cleaning, washing, gardening etc. This, for me, was the most fascinating part of the House, with scores

of items to view. A long, low corridor led us from the kitchens and living quarters into the laundry where we appreciated the grinding work of the laundry maids, having to use great physical skill with heavy



boilers, “Dollies”, scrubbing boards and drying racks suspended from the ceiling and sliding out from a groove in the wall.

Around mid-day we made our way to the dining room where we enjoyed lunch...with a choice of quiche or ploughman’s lunch ...each accompanied by a colourful salad.

After lunch it was time to explore the garden, although some of us returned to the “downstairs” to explore further and listen to recordings/videoclips made by actors depicting some of the servants describing their daily tasks and their experience of life at Kelmarsh.



We were very interested to read extracts from a census which showed that the servants came to work here from far and wide...from places such as Yorkshire and the Isle of Wight and that some of them had moved here with the family when they first came to own the Hall.

Much of the family’s wealth came from Coal Mining and one of the rooms contained an exhibition of this industry. We noted one poster which had a heading “What is coal!”...and we remarked on the fact that many members of our younger generation have no knowledge or experience of either handling or using coal ...food for thought!

The gardens too were spectacular ...and vast. Many of our members explored the woodland walk and the enormous walled garden, while some of us sat on one of the many benches and enjoyed the sun.



It was a wonderful visit to Kelmarsh Hall...the guides were so helpful, friendly and knowledgeable and we felt honoured with their trust in leaving on open display so many precious items for our perusal.

Thank you to Rose Wheat and others who organised such an interesting day.

*Hazel Glover*

| <b>NSNTA Committee 2025</b>                                                          |                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
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| <b>Vacant</b><br>Vice-chair                                                          |                                                                                     |
| <b>Richard Adams</b><br>Secretary and Membership Secretary<br>rjadams@doctors.org.uk | 79 Whitmore Road<br>Newcastle ST5 3LZ<br>07599 912938                               |
| <b>Anthea Bond</b><br>Talks Organiser<br>antheabond@hotmail.com                      |                                                                                     |
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| <b>Helen Mansell</b><br>Programme Coordinator<br>helenmansell@gmail.com              | 01782 626091, 07866 352927                                                          |
| <b>John Spriggs</b><br>Newsletter and Website<br>NSNTA.newsletter@outlook.com        | Rose Villa, Bowers Bent<br>Standon, Stafford ST21 6SG<br>01782 791360               |
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| <b>Sue Till</b><br>st.till@icloud.com                                                | 6 Kingsfield Oval, Basford,<br>Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs ST4 6HW<br>01782 405415 |
| <b>Other Posts</b>                                                                   |                                                                                     |
| <b>Kay Williams</b><br>williakay@gmail.com                                           | 3 The Spinney, Madeley Heath, Crewe, CW3 9TB.<br>01782 751018                       |

## Programme Summary 2025

### August

Thu 21<sup>st</sup> Car Trip: Halfpenny Green Vineyard.

Thu 28<sup>th</sup> –  
Mon 1<sup>st</sup> Sep Coach Holiday: 5 days in Douglas, Isle of Man.

### September

Mon 8<sup>th</sup> Car Trip: Wollerton Old Hall Garden, Market Drayton.

Fri 12<sup>th</sup>  
– Sun 21<sup>st</sup> Heritage Open Days.

Tue 16<sup>th</sup> Talk: Shaun Farrelly: James Brindley - the father of British canal engineering.

Thu 25<sup>th</sup> Social: Lunch at The Hand and Trumpet.

### October

Tue 21<sup>st</sup> Talk: Rob Pointon: All the Queen's Horses and All the King's Men.

Wed 29<sup>th</sup> Car Trip: Keele Observatory.

### November

Thu 6<sup>th</sup> Car Trip: Repeat visit to Stafford History Centre.

Tue 18<sup>th</sup> Talk: Steve Booth: Staffordshire and the coming of the Tudors in 1485.

### December

Sun 14<sup>th</sup> Christmas Lunch at Double Tree.

### January 2026

Tue 20<sup>th</sup> Talk: Steve Brewer: The making of the Peak District.

### February

Tue 17<sup>th</sup> Talk: Peter Thomas: Plant Clocks: telling the time and season.

### March

Tue 17<sup>th</sup> Talk.

### April

Tue 21<sup>st</sup> Talk: Danny Wells: The English and Gardening.

### May

Tue 19<sup>th</sup> AGM & Talk.

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