

# North Staffordshire National Trust Association

**Newsletter No. 117**

**Autumn 2020**

[www.northstaffsnt.org.uk](http://www.northstaffsnt.org.uk)



## **A Note from our new Chair**

Dear All,

I do hope you are well and are coping with these restrictive times. I want to keep you informed regarding what your local committee has been doing during our time of relative inactivity.

We have had two meetings on Zoom - an AGM and one full committee meeting.

Whilst all of our talks, holidays and visits are in abeyance, we are in a position to reactivate them at a moment's notice. We will keep you informed at every stage and within this newsletter there are reports from the programme

coordinator and the talks organiser.

Rest assured that as soon as we are able normal service will be resumed and within our programme there will be something for everybody. We particularly miss the fellowship which we have enjoyed for so many years. Long may it return.

Best wishes

*David Morgan*

Chair North Staffordshire National Trust Committee

**Welcome** to the Autumn edition of our Newsletter – or should we say No-News-Letter? With no outstanding trips to review and no new ones in the planning there is little to fill these pages, but the Committee felt that we should at least put pen to paper, so to speak, to show they are still alive and what they are doing about the situation! We did not feel justified in the cost of a full print run for the information contained so it is being emailed to those with emails addresses and posted to those without. We hope that by the time of our Christmas edition (copy date November 9<sup>th</sup>) we have better news and can revert to a more normal format, although fear Covid-19 may impact us well beyond this.

**First** we would like to thank Ralph for his many years of valuable service, and welcome our new Chair, David Morgan. We published a profile of him when he joined the committee, and bring this up to date to show our ship is in safe hands.

He writes: *“I was born in Stoke on Trent and educated at Wolstanton Grammar School where I enjoyed many years of playing sport with a little bit of work in between.*

*I initially studied Physical Education and French at College and then whilst teaching completed degrees in French and Law. My teaching career spanned 43 years as assistant teacher, Head of Department and finally Deputy Head at St. John Fisher High School for 21 years.*

*I enjoy speaking foreign languages particularly French and German. I have learnt Spanish and Russian but have forgotten most of it!*

*I also enjoy sport and played cricket in the North Staffs and South Cheshire League for many years. I also played rugby for Trentham and then hockey for Stone in my later years. I now attempt to play golf!*

*I am a founder member of Wolstanton Rotary Club and have been President twice. Rotary has been a very enjoyable experience and has led to lasting friendships and many satisfying charitable activities. I became a magistrate in 2005 and served 10 years on the adult and youth bench and also in the family court. This was at times very hard work, particularly as chairman but I did feel I was contributing to the community. I have been chairman of governors at Stoke Minster Primary school for 8 years and this is extremely busy and demanding but again enjoyable. I have tremendous admiration for the work of the teachers in the school. I was church warden at St Andrew’s in the Westlands from 2014 to 2018.*

*I have been married to Val for 50 years and we have two children, James and Rebecca. James is a QC at St Philips Chambers in Birmingham and is also a Deputy High Court Judge. Rebecca is a teacher at a primary school in Leamington Spa. Rebecca has two boys aged 9 and 11 and James has two girls aged 16 and 14.*

*I really appreciate the work which the local National Trust does and the superb efforts which are made to give us the opportunity to see new places and to travel, and am very pleased to be asked to be chairman of this vibrant local committee in North Staffordshire with lots of ideas and commitment. Let us hope and pray that we shall be given the opportunity to carry them out very shortly. We have many trips planned and speakers for the next two years.”*

## **Membership**

We have pleasure in announcing and welcoming the following new members: Helen and Keith Davies. This takes our membership to 324.

## **Programme Update**

Below is a summary of where things stand on events that were planned for the year before Covid-19 hit us. Please keep monitoring the website for ongoing information as it unfolds, and ensure our Secretary Richard Adams has your email address for any general announcements. Where you do not have Internet access or an email address, please lodge a telephone number with the organisers of any events you are interested in so you can be informed if and when they are to go ahead.

**We particularly draw your attention to the Scottish Holiday below: more welcome!**

## **Programme Co-ordinator's Message Autumn 2020**

Sadly all Coach Trips planned for 2020 have had to be cancelled due to Covid guidelines. The difficulty of social distancing on a coach makes running a trip with a smaller group financially not viable even if the coaches were available and the venues were opening. Our first venture offering a mini 2 night break in October has also been cancelled for 2020.

I understand that all organisers have informed participants of the cancellations and have shredded or returned any monies. However I am delighted that most are willing to re arrange their trips for next year – circumstances allowing. Details will be circulated generally and specifically to those who have showed an interest for this year.

The car trips, which include the evening canal event with a fish and chip supper, the Woodland Craftsman trip, the Pipes in the Peaks concert, the Dorothy Clive Garden's visit, the Crewe Heritage Centre and a visit to Dunham Massey have all been cancelled due to the venues being unavailable or unsuitable for distancing. Again, we hope to be able to re activate these in the 2021 calendar once the future looks clearer.

We realise that many members who have been shielding or locked down since March, on their own in many cases, and are now beginning to look outside their safe bubble, will hesitate to commit themselves to any events before the New Year, and perhaps into 2021. However, I think we all need something to raise our spirits and to look forward to. Be assured that we are all still here and hoping to offer a light at the end of the tunnel as soon as it becomes possible and safe to do so. We hope you feel able to continue to support us and will trust us to make future events as safe as possible.

Looking forward to seeing all our friends again soon.

*Marion*

## **Date to be arranged: Walk: Three waterways of Stoke-on-Trent.**

This walk was scheduled for July but of course had to be cancelled. The pub lunch seems unlikely to be possible for a while yet, but hopefully a walk outside in the fresh air will be allowed soon. I have shortened the route a little, and now plan to start and finish it in Hanley Park. Date to be arranged later!

We start and finish at the gates of Hanley Park, a small gem in the heart of our city which you may not be familiar with. The Caldon canal goes through the park, and we will set off from here along the towpath. Do you know where the first ever public infirmary was built in Stoke? We pass by its site, followed by Jesse Shirley's Bone and Flint Mill, now the Etruria Industrial Museum. Here we join the Trent and Mersey canal, passing by the old Twyford's works and Shelton cemetery, then thread our way between Stoke station and the Potteries D Road. Sounds grim but it really isn't; you will see parts of the city from a fresh perspective! We cross over to the Staffordshire University campus, where we walk through their Natural Heritage nature reserve alongside the River Trent, some 25 acres of managed grassland, wetlands, lakes and deciduous trees. Water vole and otters, plus numerous bird species and butterflies have been seen in the summer here. Then it's a short cut back to the park we left maybe two hours ago. With luck the park café will be open, where some may choose to linger a while longer.

This walk is about 3 or 4 miles in total, mostly flat and mostly on surfaced paths. There are no stiles and little traffic. It is an urban walk, so please be aware that there will be litter and there will be graffiti.

Once I can fix a date for this walk, I will send an email out to all members. If you don't see our emails, please register your interest now by calling me on 01782 637183 and I will phone you back when we have a date, or drop me a line at 79 Whitmore Road, Newcastle ST5 3LZ, with an SAE.

We normally collect donations on our walks, but this time it's more important that we just get together again, and anyway I don't fancy handling cash (remember that?). Who knows, we may be wearing masks, we may all be walking 2m apart, but it will still be good to meet again!

*Richard Adams*

## **NT Talks at the Medical Institute.**

Due to the continuing disruption and uncertainty caused by the current pandemic, it has been reluctantly decided to cancel the first two talks of the new season which were scheduled to take place on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> September and Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> October. We are hoping to resume 'normal' service on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> November but we will, of course, keep you informed about all future events. Please keep your eye on your emails and also the Association's web-site for up-dates.

Very best wishes to you all and looking forward to meeting up as soon as possible.

*Rose Wheat*

## **Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December: Christmas Dinner and photo exhibition.**

As part of our plans to celebrate this anniversary year, our Christmas dinner was planned to be held at the historic Upper House in Barlaston.

The Upper House are ready to welcome us for our annual festive meal but only when government guidelines permit. It would be pointless holding a meal while social distancing is in place. However we have a back-up date - 20th January at 7pm. Please keep both dates in your diaries and hopefully we will be able to celebrate before long. We really need to meet all our friends again.

Please contact Cynthia (tel: 01782 641765 or email: [dumbeltoncynthia@gmail.com](mailto:dumbeltoncynthia@gmail.com)) if you wish to attend, and if both dates are suitable. This will help determine numbers and viability. It is not a promise to attend; full details and booking forms will be issued when appropriate.

## **Photographs 1980-2020**

Kay Williams has been collecting photographs for the annals and continues to welcome prints sent by members. Her contact details are on the back of this newsletter.

In addition, at the Dinner, we were intending to have presentations of images and artefacts reflecting our 40 years of activity. How and what will now go ahead will depend on circumstances, but the editor ([Newsletter@northstaffsnt.org.uk](mailto:Newsletter@northstaffsnt.org.uk)) welcomes digital images to put together a slide show that can be shown at the event and/or another convenient event and the website.

## **12<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> April 2021: Scottish Heritage and History Holiday**

5 Days from £522 pp (including £25 per person National Trust donation).

One of the casualties of the Covid pandemic was our holiday to Scotland, scheduled to take place in June 2020. I'm delighted to report that this wonderful holiday has been re-arranged and will now take place next Spring from Monday 12<sup>th</sup> April to Friday 16<sup>th</sup> April and at 2020 prices and the itinerary as planned.

Our holiday includes four nights half board at the 4\* New Lanark Hotel, visits to East Riddlesden Hall and Sizergh Castle on our outward and return journeys and guided tours of both the New Lanark Mill World Heritage Centre and Edinburgh. We will also visit an historic tenement house and Kelvingrove Museum in Glasgow and two elegant and picturesque National Trust properties, Pollok House and Culross Palace. We shall have a short amount of free time to explore Edinburgh before we meet our guide and enjoy our sightseeing tour from the comfort of the coach. The day after our arrival we shall appreciate a coach free day when, after our guided tour of the Heritage Site we will be free to discover the fascinating on-site museum or take a walking trail along the river to the stunning Falls of Clyde.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE TO ENJOY WHILE STAYING AT AN HISTORIC HOTEL AND AT AN AMAZING PRICE. Copies of the flyer and booking form are on the website, for reference.

Rooms of all types still available (£60 single room supplement). For further details and booking form contact Regent Travel, 63, High St, Stone, ST15 8AD or telephone 01785 818202. A £75pp deposit will be required to reserve your place.

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## **AGM**

As you are aware the AGM on 12<sup>th</sup> May had to be postponed, however a Zoom meeting was held on the day to present the reports below and confirm actions that needed to be made on the day, namely appointment of new Chair and re-election of ongoing committee, pending ratification by members as and when a formal meeting can be held, and there being no other nominations by that date.

### **Chairman's Report**

I am so glad to be writing this report and you reading it, because it means that, so far, we have survived. However, if you have been affected by a loss, I would like to send my sincere condolences. Equally, I can imagine what it has been like for the waiting relatives of the fortunate ones who pulled through, At this point I should refer to my Note from The Chair in the latest Newsletter. In the note I anticipated this report on our state of health in the last year. Basically, with certain caveats, everything was going so well. Even with seven years' worth of hindsight, I could not have predicted the condition we are in now. However, in moving forward, the new Chair will be greatly helped by the tangible positive mental attitude of the membership.

Everyone is determined to get on with life and make the most of it. How else can I explain your motivation to book trips immediately and when participating, displaying a mental and physical agility belying the years?

We will get through this bad time and be there when the government realises that part of a pensioner's care package should be membership of the National Trust. Until then, I urge you to go on line and make virtual tours of Trust properties and our national heritage.

Most importantly, do keep up your Trust and Association Membership. Richard as Secretary, and John as Newsletter Editor will keep in touch with you and you can keep in touch with The Association through news on our website. Speaking personally, I would like to see reports and photos of places you regard as special in the Newsletter, whether it is something you have spotted on a walk or places you want to visit as soon as we are able. Who knows we may be able to hold a North Staffs NTA Zoom meeting or House Party?

Best wishes to my successor and all the Members.

See you soon, or see you Zoom,

*Ralph White*

### **Secretary's Report**

It was all going so well, then the virus arrived...

26 events took place successfully, maintaining our record of once a fortnight on average. And that doesn't include three events in March which were cancelled by the lockdown; hopefully these can be easily rearranged when the "new normal" arrives.

The 26 events were seven coach outings, seven car outings, seven talks, three walks, our 5-day holiday in Suffolk, and the Christmas social meal. Thanks to all concerned in the organisation of these.

Our total membership is now 330, which is some 10% down on this time last year. Our numbers have been falling gradually for several years but this is an exceptional drop. However, we are in exceptional times, and unsurprisingly we have not signed up any new members since January.

*Richard Adams*

### **Treasurer's report**

As the National Trust staff were unable to finalise their "wish list" of projects for which they would like our support, our Net Surplus for the year ( £4473 ) is much higher than usual. No doubt when things are back to normal, we will be able to distribute our funds in the accustomed manner. Overall, our reduced Income for the year was matched by a corresponding decrease in our Expenditure.

Our thanks go to James Scott of Hardings, Chartered Accountants, for examining the accounts and reporting thereon.

*Huw Davies*

### **Programme Organiser's report**

We have been fortunate to be able to enjoy a full and varied programme of events during 2019. None of these could have taken place at all, or proved to be so successful, without the vision, hard work and enthusiasm of the members who volunteer to organise trips and walks. I would like to thank them all for the work they have done, and for making my job as programme organiser so easy. For the future, the more members who are able to help with just one event means we are not abusing the good will of the few.

Unfortunately, due to circumstances beyond our control we have been forced to cancel much of the programme planned and outlined in the last newsletter for 2020. Hopefully many of these events can be rescheduled in the future. Many will already know we have a date for the Scottish Holiday for 12th April 2021, however we shall need a few more people to register an interest with Regent Travel for this to be viable. Likewise, we are hoping the October mini break will be able to go ahead and although we cannot be sure at this time, we are taking deposits and asking for notice of interest so that we know we have enough people for this to be viable.

For other events and the future, we can only keep you up dated via the next newsletter, the website which I urge everyone to get used to accessing on a regular basis, and emails. We shall meet again. Stay safe and keep in touch.

*Marion Lycett*

### **Message from the new Chairman**

Dear members,

I find it strange to thank everyone for their support as I take up the chair this May without an AGM or even any personal interaction between myself and our members. The committee is determined to keep things going so that when we return to normal, whatever that may turn out to be, we will still have a vibrant organisation with good speakers, interesting visits and holidays combined with excellent fellowship.

This is a most opportune time to thank Ralph for all his work and leadership as Chair during the last few years. I think it will be for me a difficult task to follow him.

I look forward to seeing everyone as soon as we are allowed.

Best wishes

*David*

| <b>NSNTA Committee 2020-2021</b>                                                     |                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>David Morgan</b><br>Chairman<br>david.morgan467@outlook.com                       | 7 Shefford Road<br>Newcastle ST5 3LE<br>01782 617467                          |
| <b>Rose Wheat</b><br>Vice-chairman and Talks Organiser<br>rose.wheat@virginmedia.com | 12 West Avenue<br>Newcastle ST5 0NB<br>01782 616113                           |
| <b>Richard Adams</b><br>Secretary and Membership Secretary<br>rjadams@doctors.org.uk | 79 Whitmore Road<br>Newcastle ST5 3LZ<br>01782 637183                         |
| <b>Huw Davies</b><br>Treasurer<br>huws.family@gmail.com                              | 2 Vicarage Crescent<br>Newcastle ST5 1NJ<br>01782 710952                      |
| <b>Marion Lycett</b><br>Programme Coordinator<br>marionlycett@hotmail.com            | Millstone House, The Green, Bagnall<br>Stoke-on-Trent ST9 9JR<br>01782 502919 |
| <b>John Spriggs</b><br>Newsletter and Website<br>newsletter@northstaffsnt.org.uk     | Rose Villa, Bowers Bent<br>Standon, Stafford ST21 6SG<br>01782 791360         |
| <b>Roger Cartlidge</b><br>rogandshirl@hotmail.co.uk                                  | 3 The Mount, Scholar Green<br>Stoke-on-Trent ST7 3HY<br>01782 777513          |
| <b>Sue Corlett</b><br>sue.corlett@btinternet.com                                     | 24 The Covert<br>Newcastle ST5 4BL<br>01782 719075                            |
| <b>Cynthia Dumbelton</b><br>dumbeltoncynthia@gmail.com                               | 32 The Lea<br>Stoke-on-Trent ST4 8DY<br>01782 641765                          |
| <b>Jane Mayer</b><br>janemayeruk@yahoo.co.uk                                         | 16 Shaldon Avenue, Stockton Brook<br>Stoke-on-Trent ST9 9PU<br>01782 533476   |
| <b>Sue Till</b><br>st.till@icloud.com                                                | 9 St. Vincent Mews, Meaford,<br>Stone, Staffs ST15 8GW<br>01785 811794        |
| <b>Ralph White</b><br>ralph@ralphwhitedesign.com                                     | Thyme Cottage, 20 Upper Green, Wolverhampton<br>WV6 8QH<br>01902 752833       |
| <b>Bob Winter</b><br>robert.winter14@btinternet.com                                  | 15 Robinson Road<br>Stoke-on-Trent ST4 8ED<br>01782 642942                    |
| <b>NSNTA Archivist</b>                                                               |                                                                               |
| <b>Kay Williams</b><br>williakay@gmail.com                                           | 3 The Spinney, Madeley Heath, Crewe, CW3 9TB.<br>01782 751018                 |