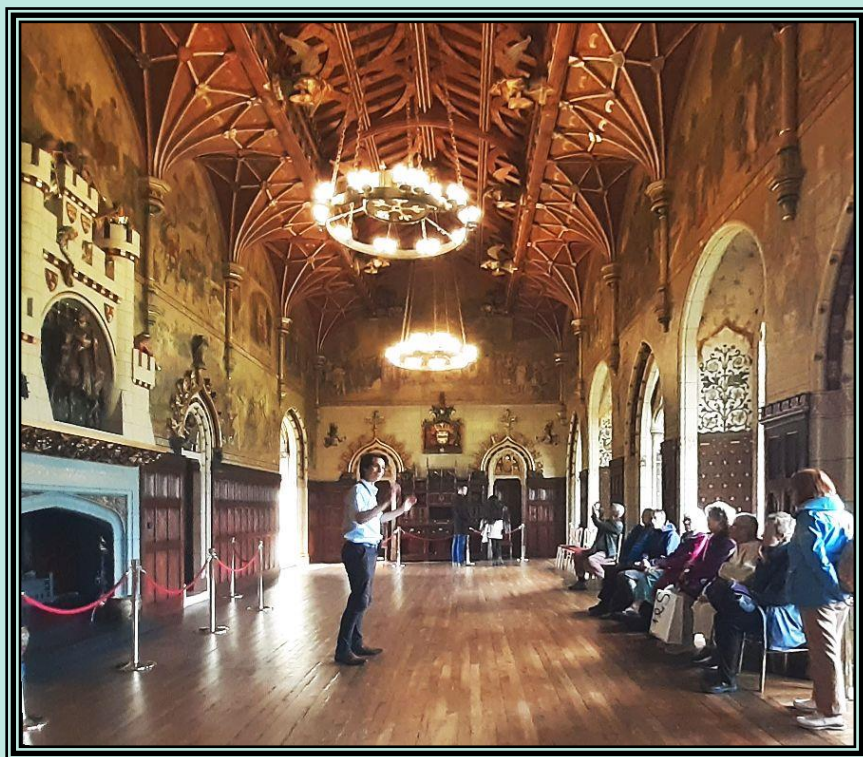


# North Staffordshire National Trust Association

Newsletter No. 130

Winter – Spring 2025

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



Introduction to Cardiff Castle – The Banqueting Hall

© John Spriggs

## 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, if requested, 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." (**not** "NSNTA"). Cheques are normally not cleared until after an event. We will give notice if we need to do otherwise.

Refunds on cancellation are possible only if there is a waiting list. Please do not find your own substitute travellers: people on the waiting list have priority.

The Committee reserves the right to cancel any event that is not viable.

The National Trust makes insurance arrangements, including public liability insurance, for Supporter Groups that carry out volunteering/activities for the benefit of the National Trust.

Whilst participating in an event please make sure that you carry the organiser's mobile phone number from the booking acceptance form in case you get lost. Please **DO NOT MAKE** alternative arrangements to get home without first telling the trip organiser.

---

This Newsletter is published by North Staffordshire National Trust Association to provide members with information on the forthcoming programme, reports on recent events, and other membership issues. The text and images are copyright and may not be reproduced without the owner's permission. Any views expressed by individual contributors are their own and not necessarily of the NSNTA or the NT. No liability will be accepted for errors or omissions.

We are always delighted to welcome new members – see further details on the inserts in the centre of this Newsletter.

The editor welcomes items of direct relevance to Association activities, and thanks all contributors, and apologises for failure to acknowledge any item, 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](mailto:NSNTA.newsletter@outlook.com) (01782 791360) by the 15th of the preceding month at the absolute latest (but earlier if possible!)

Printed by Colourimage Printers, High Wycombe (07368291216) [colourimage@aol.com](mailto:colourimage@aol.com)

**North Staffordshire  
National Trust Association  
Newsletter No. 130  
Winter – Spring 2025 Programme**

A Note from the Chair



Welcome to the New Year and new hope. There is a pronounced local focus this season. Whether it is ceramics, art, history, industry or a walk in the countryside we will be making the most of and appreciating local produce. Cultivation is an optimistic and positive activity; I'm with Voltaire in hoping concentrating in our backyard or garden when we seem not to be in the best of all possible worlds is good for us.

So let us ring our bells to welcome The New Year and hope its events encourage us to postpone wringing our hands for a little longer.

Best Wishes for Health, Happiness and persuading friends to join The Association.

Happy New Year.

*Ralph*

## Data Protection Policy

The North Staffordshire National Trust Association (NSNTA) is a non-profit voluntary organisation which endeavours to comply with the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998, and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of May 2018.

Personal data collected by us on membership forms, renewal forms and event booking forms will be limited to: names, addresses, email addresses and telephone numbers. It will only be used for: administration of membership, communication of information and organisation of events within and related to the NSNTA.

Personal data will not be shared with the National Trust or any third party, or to other members.

Membership lists are destroyed when 18 months old. Lists relating to specific events are destroyed when the event is complete.

Contact the Membership Secretary if you wish to view/amend/delete any of your personal data.

By providing personal data on our membership forms and event booking forms, you are consenting to this, our Data Protection Policy, and to our stated use of your personal data.

~~~~~

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.

### **Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> January: Talk: Catrin Jones, Chief Curator at the V&A Wedgwood Collection – “Wedgwood on Tour”.**

In April 2025 a major exhibition, Wedgwood: Artists and Industry, opens in Australia on the first leg of a global tour. Join Catrin Jones, Chief Curator of the V&A Wedgwood Collection, for a talk about the process of creating this exhibition showcasing the wonderful objects in the V&A Wedgwood Collection. She will also give a snapshot of upcoming projects, talks and events to mark 10 years of the V&A Wedgwood Collection in Barlaston.

### **Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> February: Car Outing: Guided tour of Moorcroft Pottery.**

The techniques used in making Moorcroft's high quality earthenware collectable art pottery are virtually the same today as when the business was founded by William Moorcroft in 1913. Unlike other pottery, Moorcroft decorate on unfired clay underneath the glaze, the colours being outlined with liquid clay known as tube lining. Every item is individually hand made.



Each stage of creating this most beautiful pottery will be demonstrated to us by craftspeople showing us how they bring the piece to life and explaining all the aspects of the process from mould making, slip casting, hand turning, tube lining, hand painting, kiln firing and, finally, glazing.

Assembling at 10.30am (opening time) we will gather ready for experts to guide us in groups around the original factory - now the Heritage Visitor Centre. The 60-minute tour will follow the production process, from clay to finished work of art. Afterwards you have the opportunity to examine the Grade II listed bottle oven built in 1919, browse around the small museum with its beautiful Liberty display cabinets, (see if you can spot the moustache-protecting teacup), and shop at your leisure. Each visitor will be given a £20 voucher redeemable against purchases made on the day.

There is a loop hearing system installed and the route of the tour is all on one level, with no steps or stairs, but no chairs to sit down on. However, it is wheelchair friendly and also suitable for slimline mobility scooters, but not the 4x4 type. Coffee & hot chocolate are available from a machine – payment by card only. Toilet facilities and free parking on site.

For those who wish to round off the morning with lunch, we would suggest taking the short journey to the Middleport Pottery café (Port Street, Middleport, S-o-T ST6 3PE - Phone: 01782 499 766) where refreshments can be enjoyed at own expense. Please tick the box on the booking form in order that we can give Middleport an approximate number of people to expect. It may be that our party is allocated the long table in the upstairs room, accessed by quite a steep staircase.

**Cost:** £7.50 per person (non-members £8.50) to include an hour long guided tour with demonstrations of the production process and the opportunity to see some magnificent pieces of Moorcroft pottery and perhaps buy a souvenir - if not an item of pottery, then perhaps a lovely greetings card. Free on-site parking. Number limited to 24; preference given to NSNTA members.

Please apply as soon as possible to John Pedrazzini, enclosing the booking form, a cheque made payable to "North Staffs NT Assoc", and your stamped Self Addressed Envelope at least 8½" x 4" for confirmation of booking and further information to be sent to you. Closing date for applications to be received by John is Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> January. (Enquiries: 07594 599 375; Email: johnpedrazzini@yahoo.co.uk)

**Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> February: Talk: Stuart Haywood, Victorian Migrants from Wales to North Staffordshire.**

Stuart Haywood is the current Chairman of the local Welsh Society and has undertaken extensive research into the migration of Welsh people to North Staffordshire, chiefly during the Victorian era. This was used to compile his book "The Welsh in North Staffordshire", which has been described as "excellent" and "a comprehensive study" by local historians. His presentation gives an overview of the "Welsh Colonies" in the area.

During the Victorian era there was significant migration from Wales to England and this presentation concentrates on the locations within North Staffordshire where the

migrants settled. The incentives to move are examined, as well as how they created “Welsh Colonies” in the area. The sources used for the presentation includes Welsh and local newspapers, Welsh journals, Welsh and local history books plus census data.

### **Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> March: Car Trip: V&A archives and reserve collection at Wedgwood in Barlaston.**

Join us for a tour of the V&A Wedgwood Collection’s archives and stores with our curator and archivist. Currently the focus of a major cataloguing and digitisation project, Unpacking the V&A Wedgwood Collection, you will explore areas not normally open to the public, and see objects from the collection and archive up close.

Meet at 10:30 at the main entrance from the visitors’ car park. The tour will take approximately two hours. Afterwards, there is a light lunch in the tearoom. Please indicate whether you wish to have this, (approx. £10, pay on the day) or bring your own. In the afternoon, the museum will be open until 5pm to visit at our own pace.

Please apply using the booking form with cheque and SAE. Cost £20 per person, (non-members £21pp), includes a small donation to the National Trust, as usual. Enquiries: Anthea Bond [antheabond@hotmail.com](mailto:antheabond@hotmail.com).



### **Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> March: Talk: Steve Booth: The Dukes and Duchesses of Sutherland after 1833 and their local impact.**

Steve is a retired history teacher with a huge knowledge of the history of our area. In 2022, he spoke to us about Lidice and the Potteries in 1942. Earlier in 2024, he spoke about the Blitz in the Potteries, June 1940-March 1941, which generated a lively discussion. This talk is about the family at Trentham Hall.

### **Thursday 3rd April: Car Trip: Staffordshire History Centre, Eastgate Street, Stafford, ST16 2NQ.**

Thanks to a massive grant from the National Heritage Lottery Fund Staffordshire has a remarkable, new history centre in Stafford. Staffordshire’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 chance for a glimpse behind the scenes and the opportunity to ask questions over a hot drink after the tour which will last around 90 minutes.

We will meet at 10:25am 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. Please let me know if you have any mobility issues as part of the tour includes steps. If anyone has a Blue Badge I can provide additional information nearer the date.

Cost: £7:50 (non-members £8:50) including tea or coffee and usual donation to the National Trust.

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

**As numbers are restricted it is advisable to apply as soon as possible.**

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

Pugin, Street, Bodley and Shaw – just some of the major Victorian architects that left a rich legacy of Gothic Revival church building between 1840-1890 in Staffordshire. The focus of this talk is primarily in the Staffordshire Moorlands. What was the Gothic Revival and why were the Staffordshire Moorlands prominent in its development?



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

This walk was scheduled for the 14<sup>th</sup> of July last year but cancelled due to bad weather. We are hoping for better luck this time!

Four and a half miles, easy walking, no hills, eight stiles.

This walk starts and finishes at Little Moreton Hall, a favourite and special place for many of us. We will head off in to the Cheshire countryside, taking a loop to Scholar Green then a second loop back to the hall for lunch and/or a chance to tour the hall again.





We will meet on the main car park for an 11am start, and expect to return by around 1.30pm. The walk is about 4.5 miles, all on level ground though there are about eight stiles to negotiate. It's a mixture of grassy fields, quiet roads and canal towpath. We do need to cross the busy A34 road twice, with appropriate care – away from this road we soon find the peace of countryside.

Landmarks en route include Rode Hall, All Saints Church Scholar Green, and Ransdell Hall. The latter predates the Macclesfield canal which now runs across the bottom of their front lawn – perhaps uniquely; the then owners came to an agreement with the canal company who, as compensation for the loss of unimpeded views, erected a decorative fence along the canal. This fence is still there 197 years later, well maintained, and at least a quarter of a mile long.

This event could suit couples where one enjoys walking and one does not or cannot. Little Moreton Hall can easily entertain one partner for a couple of hours while the other takes their exercise!

Suggested donation for the walk is £3.00 for members, £4.00 for guests, payable on the day. Children and well-behaved dogs are welcome at no charge. Dogs are not permitted anywhere inside the hall.



Please book your place with Richard Adams, by email, or by post with an SAE. [rjadams@doctors.org.uk](mailto:rjadams@doctors.org.uk) or 79 Whitmore Road, Newcastle ST5 3LZ.

## *Advance Booking*

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

### **Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> May: Car Trip: Free Social Event at Biddulph Grange Garden.**

Following the success of last year's event, The Committee would like to invite you to partake of refreshments at Afternoon Tea in the Drawing Room. The Gardens will be reaching their peak and this will be a chance to view the display cabinet discussed at last year's event and for which we gave a donation of £5,000.

Normal entrance arrangements to the grounds apply. The property opens at 10 am until 5 pm. Please meet in the Drawing Room at 3 pm.

There are no booking forms, if you would like to go please email [ralph@ralphwhitedesign.com](mailto:ralph@ralphwhitedesign.com). Or send a stamped addressed envelope I can use for reply. If you are a National Trust volunteer please let me know.

Please do not reserve by telephone, but do let me know if you have booked but are unable to go as PLACES ARE LIMITED and I can accommodate someone else.

(I am sorry it is not possible to cater for vegan diets and we can't be sure the baked in Biddulph Grange Kitchen cakes haven't been near nuts).

*Ralph White*

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

The Museum will welcome us with an introductory talk at 10.30, coffee or tea is available from 10.00 when the museum opens. Following the Introductory talk members will be free to explore the extensive and ever expanding attractions. Many of the workshops and shops will be staffed by actors to enhance the Victorian experience.





The car journey from Newcastle will take approx. one hour and it is hoped that drivers will offer car sharing to enable as many members as possible to go. For anyone who is willing to offer or requires a lift details are on the booking form or contact the organiser directly.

Blists Hill are offering a Group Booking Discount for entry of £10.50 pp. Cost is therefore only £17pp. Parking charges, and refreshments at own expense.

Send cheque made out to North Staffs NT Assoc and the booking form plus sae, unless happy to receive further information by email. Enquiries: Phil Alcock, phil.alcock@yahoo.co.uk or 01782 502919 / 0781 402 8828.

### June: Car Trip: Tatton Park Japanese Garden.

A car trip is proposed to visit Tatton Park in June and particularly the Japanese Garden, one of the first and most extensive Japanese gardens in Europe. This garden is maintained by the Japanese Garden Society and Tatton Park's own gardening team who have kindly offered to host our visit.



The car journey for this trip is approx. one hour. Details will follow in the next Newsletter.

### Thu 28<sup>th</sup> Aug - Mon 1<sup>st</sup> Sep 2025: Coach Holiday: 5 days in Douglas, Isle of Man.

This trip is currently fully booked but please ask in case there are cancellations.

#### ***DISCOVER THE ISLE OF MAN***

***Embrace island life and explore peaceful harbour towns and much more.***

Attractions include:

- The new Manxman Ferry from Heysham
- The Victorian 4\* Sefton Hotel on Douglas promenade
- Steam railway ride from Douglas to Port Erin
- The Great Laxey waterwheel, the Isle of Man's most iconic landmark
- Visit Ramsey and the harbour town of Peel with its fishing port and castle
- Scenic drives with wonderful views and marine life at the Calf of Man
- Evening talk and company of a local Blue Badge guide
- Visit museums including the island's rich Celtic and Viking past plus

- The TT motorbike gallery
- Seafood – local kippers and queenies

Cost for a twin or double-bedded room: £535 per person.

See the flyer, more details and booking form on the website or from Cynthia Dumbelton on [dumbeltoncynthia@gmail.com](mailto:dumbeltoncynthia@gmail.com). If you don't use the internet, please ring on 01782 641765.

## *Donations*

At last year's social event at Biddulph Grange it was mentioned that funding was needed to reinstate an original feature in the garden, some steps. Happily an alternative source of funding was found, so you will be able to seek out the improvement when you visit.

An ongoing project is the revealing of the original sumptuous decoration of the Drawing Room ceiling. This survival in a private house is quite remarkable. Employing the Crace brothers was quite a statement; they mostly worked in Royal homes. The Committee has recently decided to give a further donation of £2,000 for the continuance of the restoration. We hope there will be even more to see when we visit next May.



## *Talks Organiser*

Anthea Bond has taken over as Talks Organiser, with talks in the North Staffs Medical Institute on the third Tuesday of the month at 7.30. There are no talks in June, July, August or December.

Car parking is free; please enter your car number on the tablet inside the entrance. Upstairs, there is a register for members and guests to sign in case of an emergency. Coffee and tea are available after the talk, paid for on arrival at the lecture theatre.

Anthea will be pleased to hear of good speakers who can easily travel to the Institute. [antheabond@hotmail.com](mailto:antheabond@hotmail.com)

## *We need your help*

As indicated in the last Newsletter we desperately need more support towards organising events. Our dwindling number of organisers has been doing so for many years and cannot go on for ever. Do please come along to our next planning meeting on the 14<sup>th</sup> February to see what is involved – there is plenty of help available and it is not as daunting as it looks. If you don't have ideas of your own there is a raft of suggestions for events waiting for someone to take them up. If we don't get sufficient interest before more current organisers finally retire we could risk following North Cheshire Group into closing.

## *Website*

Users will be aware that the NSNTA website is not convenient to use on mobile phones and tablets. It would be a useful addition to the system to adapt at least some pages, such as forthcoming programmes and notices, and in due course event application forms, to make them easier to use on such devices and possibly make them more attractive to a younger audience. I am not in a position to do this at present but would welcome assistance from anyone who could take on this activity, or could assist in other aspects of managing the site, or even take it on completely!

*John Spriggs*

## *Car Sharing*

As suggested in the last issue the committee is keen to encourage car sharing and we continue to include the tick boxes by default on application forms, however a reminder that it is up to the members to arrange the sharing between them. Only tick these if you require assistance in finding potential sharers and you agree that your contact details may be passed on to them, noting that the organiser may not always be in a position to assist.

## *Membership*

We have pleasure in announcing and welcoming the following who have joined since we last welcomed new members: Deirdre Evans, Derek Sargeant, Mrs. Raj Gobel, Dr. Saroj Shah, Wendy and Leslie Warrilow. Current membership is 244.

**NT Membership Discount** A reminder that a discount on the general National Trust membership subscription is available to eligible members.

## *Have Your Say!*

The committee are always anxious to know members' views on the activities of the NSNTA. Do let us have your comments on any aspect of the Association or complete the questionnaire on the website.

## *Quiz Answers*

We had two correct answers to the anagrams of National Trust properties in the last edition, from Susan Pitt and Janice Sapsford respectively. Well done to both.

|    |                      |                      |
|----|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1  | UK POOLHOLES         | POLLOK HOUSE         |
| 2  | HONES MOEPOSSUM      | MOMPESSON HOUSE      |
| 3  | DIGRACES             | CRAGSIDE             |
| 4  | GELCHEAT SIRZS       | SIZERGH CASTLE       |
| 5  | RALPHING BUDGED      | BIDDULPH GRANGE      |
| 6  | CRAFTLINE SANSLIDE   | LINDISFARNE CASTLE   |
| 7  | LOCALSPAS CURE       | CULROSS PALACE       |
| 8  | LANDRULES            | ARUNDELLS            |
| 9  | TENSEEN THOUME       | TENEMENT HOUSE       |
| 10 | DARKRAY MPH          | DYRHAM PARK          |
| 11 | ROUGH OCCUT TON      | COUGHTON COURT       |
| 12 | ALLDID ENDLESS EARTH | EAST RIDDLESDEN HALL |

## *Reviews of Recent Events*

Tue 10<sup>th</sup> - Fri 14<sup>th</sup> September: South Wales Holiday: 4 days/3 nights at the Parkway Hotel & Spa near Cardiff.

**Day 1: Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> September: Travel to Cardiff via Hay-on-Wye.**

There were surprisingly few people at the windy meeting place, St. Francis of Assisi Church, Meir, and no coach when we arrived. Eventually more came plus the coach and we set off by a very circuitous route for Newcastle, the second pick up point. Our driver remained amazingly calm as each route he took through roads, lanes and even alleyways was blocked by virtually stationary traffic as most of Stoke on Trent and its surrounds was gridlocked as a result of a threat to jump off a bridge over the A50.

On the motorway the journey was uneventful and we reached Hay on Wye, famous for its many bookshops, mid-afternoon to be greeted by torrential rain! Some of us took refuge in a café while the rest headed into town. At the exit to the car park was a bench protected by a fiery Welsh dragon commemorating the return of the Falkland Islands in 1982 and where spending a penny cost 30p! Apart from its bookshops Hay on Wye has a castle dating back to 1070 overlooking its steep streets.



The rest of the journey was uneventful as we travelled through the beautiful Brecon Beacons, reaching Parkway Hotel near Cardiff before 6.30pm. We were quickly assigned rooms, had a pleasant meal and some of us a relaxing brandy!  
*Anne Rawlins*

**Day 2: Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> September: Cardiff.**

After breakfast our very competent driver, Steve, took us on a short journey from the Parkway Hotel into Cardiff City. As we crossed an enormous square to approach Mermaid Quay, we had our first view of the combination of old traditional buildings and very modern buildings such as the truly impressive Millennium Cultural Centre (an ultra-modern giant copper coloured building whose facade is pierced with giant letters spelling out, in Welsh, "In these stones, horizons sing").





As we waited at the quayside for our boat to appear, some of us sought out the nearby Welsh Parliament building, while others explored the waterfront, feeling the vibrancy of a myriad of hotels, shops and restaurants reflecting the presence of a student population.

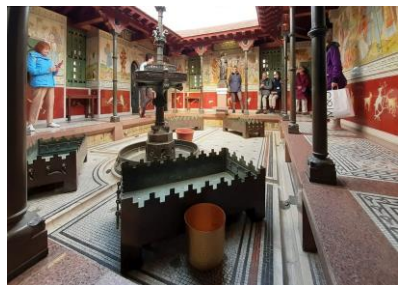
From the boat we had views of wetlands, recently developed by the use of a boom to preserve the quality of the water for the habitat created there and some of us were lucky enough to observe the raising of sluice gates which allowed for the passing of a yacht out of the enclosed bay of Cardiff.



After the boat trip we dispersed to have free time for lunch and to explore the city with its market and famous network of Victorian and Edwardian arcades. Then we all met again at the entrance to the medieval motte and bailey castle, built on the foundations of a Roman Fort. Within the castle grounds is a Manor House designed in the Neo Gothic style by William Burges for the incredibly wealthy Marquis of Bute. It was a breathtaking experience to move from room to room with the most lavishly decorated walls and ceilings, in the company of our young guide, who impressed us with his knowledge and enthusiasm!



In none of the National Trust properties that I have visited, have I ever seen anything to compare with this amazing set of rooms. It is impossible to convey the impression of seeing all of this, and for those of you who missed the trip I can only recommend that you go and see it for yourselves!!



*Hazel Glover*



### Day 3: Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> September: St Fagan's National Museum of History.



On what turned out to be a lovely sunny day (just the odd shower) we explored this wonderful outdoor museum, one of my favourites in Britain. Over fifty buildings and other structures offer a fascinating glimpse of Welsh life from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century, both secular and religious, rural and urban. Amongst so many to choose from, I loved the old farmhouses, some still lived in until the recent past, a parish church as it was

before the Reformation, with magnificently restored wall-paintings, a row of terraced houses, each interior decorated and furnished as it would have been at various intervals from 1805 until the 1980s, a miners' institute showing its educational and social aspects and of course, a 'spit and sawdust' pub where we experienced the atmosphere of the early



twentieth century but, unfortunately not the prices! There were so many buildings I could mention, many of which evoked nostalgic memories, especially the grocery shops with their displays of half-forgotten items, the reconstructed tailor's shop with materials and styles

from the 1940s and '50s and the bakehouse from which drifted smells of newly baked bread and cakes. I can only urge anyone who was not fortunate enough to join us on this super holiday to visit St. Fagan's for a real treat – but allow a day to do so as there is so much to see.



*Rose Wheat.*

## Day 4: Friday 13<sup>th</sup> September – Ludlow Food Festival and Home.

Another bright sunny day if a little chilly early on as we departed from the hotel heading for the Ludlow Food Festival. It was just right for ambling round the stalls: so many multiple sellers of cheese, cider, craft beers and pies! It was the first day of the festival and everything was fresh and the stallholders keen for an audience. Samples were tasted as we explored the different varieties.



There were a few stages for demonstrations and talks. I watched master butcher John Brereton from the Ludlow Farm Shop that we had visited on our first day dismantle a lamb with impressive mastery using incredibly sharp knives. He began by making a ‘cushion’ from the lamb shoulder, shaping and sewing it together with string. When cooked it would end up like a cake to be

served into slices on the dining table, easily cut with no bones in sight. He worked at speed and in a very short time we were introduced to the lamb’s various parts: offal, chops, racks, etc.

A cookery writer, Jenny Chandler, talked about her books including some she has written for children. Her latest book, ‘Pulse’ was for sale and includes many recipes that I will be trying out. There are such lovely colour photographs that I couldn’t resist purchasing it!



The latest demonstration I watched was by a restaurateur and forager, Ivan Tisdall-Downes, executive chef at 'Native' in Tenbury Wells. He aims to offer a true



seasonal taste of what is flourishing in the fields, forests and gardens round about the restaurant. We saw him conjure up a dish using pork.

Our friendly driver, Steve, drove efficiently and joined us whenever he could; he said he'd like to drive us on our Isle of Man holiday next year. Marion kept us all under control and she applauded our time keeping. She was a courier exceptionnelle! We all behaved ourselves and no-one got lost.

*Cynthia Dumbelton*

## Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> September: Talk: Joe Perry, Curator at the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery.

Speaking clearly and informatively, and with plenty of illuminating slides, Joe gave a review of the pre- and post-industrial ceramics found on an archaeological dig at Hilderstone.

Near to Hilderstone Hall, the site of the dig was in a field where a stone chimney was knocked down around 2018. The dig revealed the remains of a 16<sup>th</sup> century timber building – possibly Hilderstone Old Hall.

Many fragments of pottery were unearthed, such as shards of butter pots, plates and tankards, ranging from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Most of the 'treasures' were "expected" finds – indicating the residents were not of particularly high status, but comfortably off and with aspirations. Joe showed us photographs of many of the shards discovered and explained the different techniques used in their manufacture. Some of the fragments were pieces from beautiful slip-ware - decorated like icing on



a cake (as can be seen on Ozzy the Owl), to the decorative style of “trailing & dotting” or “jewelling” shown on some high status fragments. We saw mottled-ware shards - giving the appearance of wood & metal, and finer Astbury-ware, then cream-ware and pearl-ware. Such a variety of finds from salt glaze stone-ware to part of a black basalt teapot and fine blue & white transfer printed fragments. Joe also showed photos of complete pieces of pottery housed at the Museum, thereby demonstrating the fuller picture of such fragments.

Thanks go to Anthea for arranging that Joe share this tale of treasures found. Now we have been connected through time via these ceramic pieces, I wonder if some of us have been tempted to sign-up to join the Archaeological Society.

*Helen Mansell*

### Sunday 6th October: Walk: Betley circular ramble and Lunch.

Thank you to Richard for organising the autumn walk, not least as he had to revise the walk given the terrible weather we had in the lead up, and thus had walked it twice with Nicky before the Sunday morning strollers arrived.

It was a lovely autumn morning and we all assembled on the car park of the Hand and Trumpet, the group headed off oddly appearing to lead the way ahead of Richard who was the only one to know the route, and not surprisingly when we ended up in the garden of a local resident



seemingly lost, but it did appear this was the route and the garden was split by the right of way. The owners were outside, cheerfully tending to their beautifully manicured vegetable garden. I anticipate that some of our number did for a moment



think vegetable growing in an idyllic spot with kind weather was a something we may take up forgetting the vast amount of work and commitment not least the constant proximity of manure, I digress.

Richard had warned us of a few stiles but the first one was easily traved and then the walk up the bank to the ridge, I was heard to say “are we

nearly there”, which did accord a lovely view of the surrounding countryside. We headed along the ridge for a little while chatting as we did and the group changing as each other’s pace amended to then drop down from the ridge. Whichever way one sought to navigate this the ground was sodden, luckily a good boot and sturdy sock avoided a calamity, but we were spared any further rains as we continued up the slight incline to a field full to the edges with sweetcorn now almost grown to full capacity and navigable with caution and in single file. This took us to a second field but we persisted with this route as the more seemingly easier route involved a further set of stiles which were observed to be more tricky than those that would face us a little later. The sweetcorn won a second time.



The stiles we then needed to cross were seemingly built either when the ground was higher around them or made a little less easy with purpose, One was odd in that it effectively contained three in one with a short brook crossing which certainly allowed those who have kept with yoga a better chance than others.

The more tricky parts were now over as we headed back downhill and back into the village where we reconvened following a boot change for a lunch at the Pub. It was a very enjoyable lunch, we were looked after very well, and what an excellent system they have for the bill being split!

It in truth never felt like three miles but it did translate to 6000 steps, definitely an excuse for, following lunch, not achieving very much later that afternoon.

Thank you again to Richard for his detailed prewalk assessments and for being our guide on the day. Very much enjoyed by all and a chance for new acquaintances to be made.

*Paul Spratt*



## Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October: Car Trip: Chillington Hall and Gardens, Brewwood, Staffs.

Having woken to a visit from Jack Frost, the sun soon broke through and shone on us for the entire day. It was an easy drive and we were welcomed at the Hall for mid-morning coffee and biscuits served in the entrance hall. We were then divided into two groups for a tour of the ground floor rooms. Both our guides told us the tale of the Giffard family tracing them back to northern France and crossing



the Channel with William the Conqueror in 1066. They settled in Chillington some 800 years ago where they acquired land. With the rise and fall of family fortunes the house has seen its times of splendour and adversities. The present house is a product of two differing Georgian styles; that built in 1724 by Francis Smith of Warwick has rooms of an intimate size contrasted with those built on a far grander scale by John Soane some sixty years later. Not all the rooms in the house are used and some on the upper floors have just been left unoccupied. In its heyday it would have accommodated a great many people as evidenced by the number of bells we saw in a corridor waiting for someone to summons them.

The Giffards were Royalists during the English Civil War and assisted in the escape of Charles II to nearby Boscobel House.

This is still very much a family home and we were encouraged to use the comfortable seating upon which we were invited to sit during the tour - no teasels! A strange feature was the Saloon with clerestory lighting from a glass dome and no windows. The many portraits of the Giffards and their wives displayed in every room were described to us including one of John Giffard, the current owner who had served as Chief Constable of Staffordshire for ten years before retiring. His wife Crescent, an American interior designer from Texas, we heard is responsible for purchasing many of the antiques decorating the rooms. John and Crescent have now moved to a house in the grounds of the estate and their son Charles now lives in the Hall with his wife Tessa and their children.

Unfortunately we had insufficient time to explore the parkland which was landscaped by Lancelot (Capability) Brown in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and which includes a 70 acre man-made lake and Grecian and Roman follies.



We all drove the short distance to the attractive village of Brewwood for lunch at one of a choice of options. Then on to St. Mary and St. Chad's church to hear a short history of the building and view the magnificent marble tombs of the Giffard family.

Our thanks go to Marilyn Vigurs for expertly planning this visit to a Grade 1 listed enormous house. It was greatly enjoyed by all of us who attended.

*Jane Mayer and Cynthia Dumbelton*



Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> October: Talk: Shaun Farrelly: Keeping Off the Rocks - a brief history of British Lighthouses.

Shaun did well to condense over five hundred years of turbulent history into fifty minutes of dramatic accounts and beautiful illustrations.

Every aspect of constructing, managing, living and working in these triumphs of hope over experience was explored in a lively way. We learned why the creation of Trinity House was so necessary and the efforts that went into saving lives.

I don't think anyone in the audience was inspired to live in a lighthouse where conditions were so dangerous you might be killed whilst at work, starved or attacked by a crazed colleague. Complete automation of the now 60 lighthouses has saved lives too.

Thank you Shaun for a great talk and a new vocabulary. On dark winter nights we don't switch on the lights, we "exhibit" them.

*Ralph White.*

## Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> October: Behind the Scenes tour of the New Vic Theatre.

24 Members assembled at the New Vic for a behind the scenes tour, all keen to explore this fascinating building following our talk 12 months ago by Jill Rezzano. This tour proved to be extremely popular as our start was delayed by a party of school children.

Lynn Parry, the Educational Administrator and Project Manager for the New Vic, took us round the outside of the building to the rear entrance leading to the workshop where the enthusiasm of the staff, some employees and some volunteers, soon became evident. The history of the building and the theatre-in-the-round going back to the days of Peter Cheeseman and Stephen Joseph were explained. This current building, opened in 1986, is the first purpose built theatre-in-the-round in Europe and has an intimate 600 seater auditorium.

We were taken to all the different workshops including where the costumes were designed and assembled, with washing machines needed for when there were 2 performances in a day. All the sets for new productions were carefully assembled and decorated as appropriate.

The flexibility of this theatre to be able to produce such a variety of performances, plays and concerts was evident, not least the ability of the actors to enter the performance from within the audience aisles and from all different levels of the theatre.

How lucky we are to have such a brilliant institution on our doorstep.

Many thanks to John Pedrazzini for arranging this trip for us, so successful that a repeat visit was organised for the following Wednesday.

*Richard Mayer*

## Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> October: Repeat Behind the Scenes tour of the New Vic.

*As we had two visits, we have two reports, included here as it is nice to have different perspectives on the event!*

A group of twenty-one members met up near the main entrance to the theatre to be taken "behind the scenes" to see areas which we never see when going to see a production on stage.

First of all a very good guide told us about the history of the theatre which exists now, from when it first opened in 1986 as the first purpose-built theatre-in-the-round in Europe.





It was most interesting to hear all about the work which goes into the production of a play. We went into a large room to see where costumes are made for plays when the story is not set in modern times. We saw dresses made for productions set in the 18th century which were beautiful. At least three women were doing this kind of work which must be far from easy.

In another room we saw scenery and furniture being made for some productions which would have needed special knowledge and care.



We were told that actors and actresses come from many areas now - it is no longer one company doing several plays as in the past.

A lot of productions have reflected the experiences of communities in north Staffordshire with an



economy, particularly in the past, based on ceramics, coal and steel. Productions with many other themes have also appeared on stage. The theatre has an education department which is involved with local schools. Awards, such as Best New Play, and Best

Productions for Children and Young People, have been received by the theatre.

We all learnt a lot about the New Vic Theatre which we had not known before. A big "thank you" is owed to John Pedrazzini for arranging this visit for us.

*Sue Corlett*

## **Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> November: Talk: Dr. Peter Thomas: How can a tree live for 5,000 years?**

Despite rather inclement weather some 60+ members attended the North Staffordshire Conference Centre, aka Medical Institute, to hear Dr. Peter Thomas from Keele University, who took us on the cherry blossom walk at the University site last April, talk on the much broader subject of Trees. For some of us, this is a subject that we might want to leaf alone but, in the event, it turned out to be absolutely fascinating with much detail on how trees grow, survive, attack pests and diseases and, in some cases grow for up to 5,000 years, although not in this country where 1,500 years is a generally accepted maximum.

Accompanied by good visuals, the talk went into much detail and we all left the meeting with a clear understanding of the issues of how trees live and thrive and die and, perhaps, a general feeling that we were now "experts" on the life of trees even though it's a complex and amazing story. Thank you Peter for giving us a fascinating and enjoyable evening.

*David Dumbelton*

*Note: Did you know that our meeting room is also now the new home of the Stoke Film Theatre which, in its 50th year, has re-started showing important and significant films following many years at Staffordshire University's Lecture Theatre and the recent impact of Covid. Details are available on their website.*

| <b>NSNTA Committee 2024</b>                                                          |                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Ralph White</b><br>Chairman<br>ralph@ralphwhitedesign.com                         | Thyme Cottage, 20 Upper Green, Wolverhampton<br>WV6 8QH<br>01902 752833             |
| <b>Vacant</b><br>Vice-chairman                                                       |                                                                                     |
| <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>Huw Davies</b><br>Treasurer<br>huws.family@gmail.com                              | 2 Vicarage Crescent<br>Newcastle ST5 1NJ<br>07825 475382                            |
| <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>NSNTA.newsletter@outlook.com        | Rose Villa, Bowers Bent<br>Standon, Stafford ST21 6SG<br>01782 791360               |
| <b>Phil Alcock</b><br>phil.alcock@yahoo.co.uk                                        | Millstone House, The Green, Bagnall,<br>Stoke-on-Trent ST9 9JR<br>07814028828       |
| <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>John Pedrazzini</b><br>johnpedrazzini@yahoo.co.uk                                 | 6 Batten Walk,<br>Yarnfield ST15 0TA<br>07594 599375                                |
| <b>Sue Till</b><br>st.till@icloud.com                                                | 6 Kingsfield Oval, Basford,<br>Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs ST4 6HW<br>01782 405415 |
| <b>Bob Winter</b><br>robert.winter14@btinternet.com                                  | 15 Robinson Road<br>Stoke-on-Trent ST4 8ED<br>01782 642942                          |
| <b>Other Posts</b>                                                                   |                                                                                     |
| <b>Kay Williams</b><br>williakay@gmail.com                                           | 3 The Spinney, Madeley Heath, Crewe, CW3 9TB.<br>01782 751018                       |
| <b>Anthea Bond</b><br>Talks Organiser<br>antheabond@hotmail.com                      |                                                                                     |

## Programme Summary 2025

### January

|                      |                                                                   |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tue 21 <sup>st</sup> | Talk: Catrin Jones, Chief Curator at the V&A Wedgwood Collection. |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|

### February

|                     |                                                      |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Thu 6 <sup>th</sup> | Car Trip: Moorcroft Pottery Heritage Visitor Centre. |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------|

|                      |                                                                      |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tue 18 <sup>th</sup> | Talk: Stuart Haywood, Victorian Migrants from Wales to North Staffs. |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|

### March

|                     |                                                                         |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Wed 5 <sup>th</sup> | Car Trip: V&A archives and reserve collection at Wedgwood in Barlaston. |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                      |                                                                                             |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tue 18 <sup>th</sup> | Talk: Steve Booth: The Dukes and Duchesses of Sutherland after 1833 and their local impact. |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

### April

|                     |                                                                              |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Thu 3 <sup>rd</sup> | Car Trip: Staffordshire History Centre, Eastgate Street, Stafford, ST16 2NQ. |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                      |                                                                      |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tue 15 <sup>th</sup> | Talk: Danny Wells: Gothic Revival church buildings in Staffordshire. |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                      |                                              |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Sun 27 <sup>th</sup> | Walk: Little Moreton Hall and Scholar Green. |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------|

### May

|                     |                                  |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Thu 1 <sup>st</sup> | Social Event at Biddulph Grange. |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|

|                      |                                         |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Sat 17 <sup>th</sup> | Car Trip: Blists Hill, Open Air Museum. |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------|

|                      |               |
|----------------------|---------------|
| Tue 20 <sup>th</sup> | AGM and Talk. |
|----------------------|---------------|

### June

|     |                                        |
|-----|----------------------------------------|
| Jun | Car Trip: Tatton Park Japanese Garden. |
|-----|----------------------------------------|

### August

|                      |                                                |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Thu 28 <sup>th</sup> | Coach Holiday: 5 days in Douglas, Isle of Man. |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------|

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