

North Staffordshire Association of National Trust Members

Newsletter 79

and

January to April 2008

Programme



I'd recognise that bell anywhere!! see page 10

ARRANGEMENTS FOR TRIPS

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

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

Cheques to be made payable to the “**N. Staffs. Association of NT Members**”. Due to current banking procedure, please note that cheques are not cleared until after an event. Members are asked to write a separate cheque for each event they book. **Note:** The committee does not consider it proper that an event should incur a loss and therefore reserves the right to cancel should there be insufficient support.

For Your Safety and Enjoyment

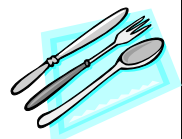
Please look carefully at what is involved in an outing or a holiday before booking. Consider the starting time, the length of the day, the amount of walking and stair-climbing involved, the number of times of getting on and off a coach, etc. so that you can enjoy the day to the full by being able to participate in all aspects of the outing. **If you have a problem with mobility or hearing, for example, please let the organiser know as soon as possible and we will try to arrange some help but we cannot guarantee to do so.**

If you have not received acknowledgement of a booking within 2 weeks, please enquire as we believe that some bookings have recently gone astray in the post.

LUNCHEON CLUB MEETINGS

The luncheon Club has got off to a good start and has been well supported. So we are offering a further three lunches to cheer you through the winter.

Please book by phone at least a week before the event. Give your name and phone number if you get my answer-phone.



Mary Malcolm 01782-613451.

North Staffordshire Association of National Trust Members

NEWSLETTER No. 79

DECEMBER 2007

and January to April 2008 PROGRAMME

A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR:

We have enjoyed another good summer programme of outings by coach and car and sincere thanks are due to all members who do so much to ensure that this happens. Especial thanks go to David and Cynthia Dumbelton who organised a very interesting and different holiday, using their knowledge of the City of London area to arrange a varied and lively programme, much enjoyed by all who went, and to Peter Moxon who arranges such a splendid programme of car outings every summer. We are pleased that lately several people have come forward with offers of help in organising events, which has enabled us to plan for next year without putting too large a load on any one person's shoulders.

Sometimes during a visit to a National Trust property it becomes apparent that there is an urgent need for some particular item for the house or garden and we have been pleased to send a cheque towards the purchase. We did this a few years ago at Clumber Park and have done so more recently for Little Moreton Hall and Trengwainton garden, in Cornwall. I hope many of you have seen the photos of the rhubarb pots, specially made, which were on display at the autumn talks. It is always more gratifying to make our donations to properties we know, or for projects we are aware of, than simply to send to the Trust's national fund, so if anyone knows of a need at one of our local properties or would like to suggest a project that we could consider funding, do let the committee know and we will enquire about making the necessary donation. In future we are required by HMCR to donate all profit made during any financial year by the end of that year or we shall be liable for tax.

As I write this, the latest news is that Sir William Proby, Chairman of the National Trust, is suggesting that the Trust should buy up areas of green-belt land and open countryside so that such land cannot be used for building houses. As he says, "Once this land is lost, it cannot be recovered". Yet we are all aware that the Government has pledged to build millions more houses to meet the

increasing demand, and if these are not built the rise in house prices will continue and fewer young people than ever will be able to purchase houses of their own. I wonder what members think of the idea of the Trust pursuing such a policy - we may all need to consider our attitude to this as it will be a big moral question to which there will be no easy answer for many people.

Every good wish for a happy and healthy New Year -
Anne Anderton

Donations made in 2007

£600 to Biddulph Grange Gardens (as agreed at AGM)

£800 to Trengwainton for garden pots

£100 to Little Moreton Hall for Audio Loops

We shall probably divide any remaining money between Downs Bank, the Peak District and Enterprise Neptune.

NEWS FROM LITTLE MORETON HALL

For many of our members Little Moreton Hall is our 'local' property. We shall try and include news items from time to time.



"It's been a busy year and plans for future developments are well underway. Two are of special interest; we have been selected to participate in Cheshire's "Year of the Garden 08" programme and we are in the process of arranging an interpretation audit for the property.

The "Year of the Garden 08" is the key tourist event of next year; our contribution is centred on an art installation entitled 'Something beautiful'. A local artist will be commissioned to produce a piece of art for display in the Orchard using one of the Trust's key communication themes – 'Cultural Heritage', as a starting point. We have asked that the work be carried out, where possible, in-situ so that our visitors will be able to see the work develop ready for an official launch in the summer.

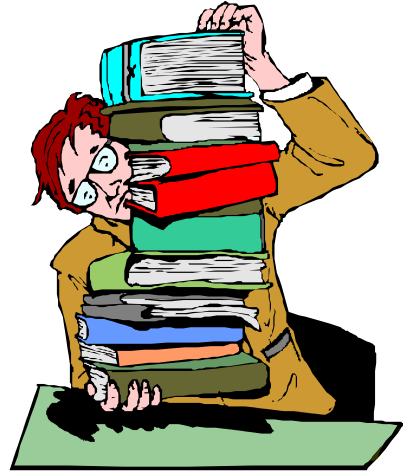
Visitors are always amazed by this building and comment on how interesting the guided tours are and their contribution to bringing the Hall to life. We have introduced a DVD for visitors who may find access to the upper floors difficult but how we interpret the story of the Hall does need refreshing. In order to ensure that we have a fully rounded view of this interpretation we are in the process of commissioning an audit to ensure that we have an interpretation plan in place ready to bid for Lottery funding in the near future."

David Watts, Property Manager

APPEAL

We need an enthusiastic **Archivist** to take an active role in up-dating and managing our archive material.

Georgina Pritchard, whom we persuaded to take over the task a few years ago, feels that her many commitments do not allow her enough time to do justice to the task. The archive was meticulously kept for many years and is already an interesting and valuable piece of social history, which deserves to have more recent material properly filed. We have all the necessary material but not the necessary organiser!



Surely among our members there is someone who would enjoy being in charge of this fascinating record of our activities since our foundation in 1980, and keeping it up to date? We need someone who is methodical, can type up recent lists of speakers and donations and spend a few hours every now and again putting any photos, leaflets etc into a file. Some of this material could then be displayed at talks, as it is always interesting to see what members have been doing on holidays and outings.

How about making this a New Year's Resolution to volunteer for the task? You would be welcome at any committee meetings but would not be required to attend - your time and enthusiasm are what we need! I'm waiting to hear from you!

Anne Anderton

01782 613024

NEWS FROM BIDDULPH GRANGE GARDEN

Like many properties the staff had to cope with the rather sudden changes in weather patterns this year. This has caused problems for the garden team who nonetheless have managed to keep the garden looking at its best. It has also resulted in quite sudden swings in our visitor patterns.

There has been continuing progress with major projects in the garden:

The Woodland Terrace - paths, steps and stonework have now been completed.

The Wall in China - first section of repairs is complete and replanting going ahead.

Restoring the **Arboretum pool** - The excavation carried out in April produced several surprises; evidence of a small island and typical Bateman rockwork around part of the bank nearest the Pinetum. Work is on-going.

Volunteers - anyone interested in volunteering can contact Christine Belford, Visitor Services co ordinator to find out what is involved. Tel 01782-375521 or Christine.belford@nationaltrust.org.uk.

Paul Baker, Property Manager



REPORTS ON TALKS AND VISITS

Saturday 30th June Coach Outing to Birkenhead for a Manchester Ship Canal Cruise to Salford Quays

On the very last day of the wettest June on record 53 intrepid NT members, led by David and Cynthia Dumbelton, set off from School St. to voyage along the **Manchester Ship Canal** from Birkenhead to Salford Quays, a trip of 6 hours.

As we pelted up the M6 the rain pelted down, but, surely, it couldn't last all day--could it? We arrived safely at Birkenhead and having queued for a few minutes we embarked onto 'Snowdrop' and, obeying David's instructions and with umbrellas at the ready, we bagged our tables along with 250 other passengers!

So, off we set, seeing the imposing Liverpool waterfront disappear into the mist and the rain. We were reliably informed by our excellent commentator [who,

incidentally, talked for the whole 6hrs with facts and figures about the canal] that the canal is 56kms long; 60metres wide; 9 metres deep and was opened in 1894. Also that we would be seeing 19 bridges in total, 9 of which were swing bridges; 5 were railway bridges and 5 were high level road bridges. In addition there are 5 locks; 4 viaducts and a very rare swing aqueduct. All of these were amazing engineering feats and certainly worth a quick dash out onto the rain-sodden deck to see them before hurrying back into the dry! Those of us used to the more modest size locks of the Trent and Mersey Canal were truly astounded at the sheer size of these monsters.

The snack bar was doing a roaring trade and about 3hrs into the trip there was real 'Dunkirk' spirit developing, as evidenced by gales of laughter emanating from various parties! As we neared the outskirts of Manchester, admiring a huge mountain of scrap metal and noting Kellogg's grain store on the right, it actually stopped raining for about half an hour- just long enough for us to walk to our awaiting coach and settle down for our homeward journey, which again took place in pouring rain! Obviously, heartfelt thanks to our driver for delivering us safely back and to Cynthia and David whose arrangements went without a hitch. I think it's true to say that we had all been part of a memorable experience.

Katie Forrest-Hay

Friday July 13th 2007 Coach Outing to Welshpool and Chirk Castle(NT)

Despite torrential rain and the ominous date the day was enjoyed by a virtually full coach of members. Our first stop at the Old Station, **Welshpool**, gave us the opportunity for a little retail therapy at its many different outlets which sold everything from golf gear and kitchenware to ornate crafts and Traffic Jam - a colourful concoction made of separate layers of strawberry, apricot and gooseberry jam. The more adventurous members of the party were not deterred by the miserable weather and walked the short distance into town to investigate its shops and restaurants. Those who remained at the Old Station enjoyed a tasty lunch at the Carriage Restaurant.



Enjoying the gardens at Chirk

In the afternoon we approached **Chirk Castle** which looked suitably menacing under the lowering black clouds. Unfortunately the rain prevented all but the most hardy from appreciating its wonderful gardens, though magnificent views across the lawns could be observed from the castle. There was much to be seen inside from the stately rooms and imposing long gallery to an exhibition of exquisite Pugin artefacts. The delicious cream tea served in the castle tearoom was further compensation for the inclement weather conditions. Some members attempted to walk off the calories with a quick dash to the second hand bookshop and farm shop situated a short distance from the main building. Many thanks to Anne Anderton for organising such an interesting trip which brightened everyone's day.

Rose Wheat

Wednesday 25th July 2007 Car Outing to Staunton Harold Hall, Ashby de la Zouch, Leicestershire

Our visit started at the Church where we were welcomed by Betty Cawle, National Trust volunteer, who gave us a brief history of the church. We were told the ladies always sat on the left side and gentlemen on the on the right. Even today when there is a wedding this rule is still abided by.

We were welcomed into the Hall by John Blunt, the present owner. He gave a brief history of the Hall. We were shown on a plan of the Hall the rooms that were rented out as offices, the rooms hired for functions and conferences and the rooms used by the family. With very little evidence of previous decor they are working with their team of tradesmen to restore the Hall to its former glory. John had lived close by the Hall all his life and after his National Service he often came with other volunteers to the Hall to help with the repairs, painting and cleaning. When the Hall came up for sale local people were much concerned for its future. There was interest from a dozen buyers and it was in April 2003 that John and Jackie, his wife, learnt they were the successful purchasers.

For a tour of the Hall we were split into two groups, half went with John and the rest of us went with Jackie. All the rooms had beautiful views either of the lake, the estate gardens or the private family gardens. We were allowed into the owners' bedroom and bathroom. When sitting in the bath you would have a beautiful view of the lake. The most memorable bedroom for me had a soft turquoise William Morris wallpaper with matching curtains and a four poster bed with matching drapes and bedding.

At the end of tour we had a welcome cup of tea and cakes.

Joan Grattage

Thursday 2nd August 2007 Coach Outing to Stoneleigh Abbey and Baddesley Clinton (NT)

During a summer, which will be remembered for its wetness, we were fortunate indeed to have a fine day for our visit to Warwickshire. First stop was **Stoneleigh** and following refreshments we were taken on a tour of the house, an imposing baroque mansion towering over the remains of an earlier Elizabethan building which adjoins it. Having viewed the impressive staircase with its beautiful cantilevered balusters surrounded by rich oak and walnut panelling, we moved on to the chapel, which has a 1761 organ, and the most remarkable feature of the abbey, the saloon, with its magnificent, three-dimensional Rococo plasterwork, depicting the Greek myth of the labours of Hercules. This room was originally the grand entrance hall and is now used for corporate functions. Throughout the house are reminders of the opulence of the Georgian age. Jane Austen, whose cousin the Rev Thomas Leigh, inherited the property in 1806, stayed at Stoneleigh and is believed to have drawn inspiration from it for many of her novels. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert visited in 1858.

At lunchtime we moved on to **Baddesley Clinton** just a few miles away and on this occasion were able to view the house and grounds at our own pace. Home to the Ferrers family for 500 years, this remarkable property has a complex history. Much of it dates from the 15th century (the moat is possibly earlier) and whilst much altered and extended remains essentially a medieval manor house as the squires of Baddesley never had the funds to make major changes.

On crossing the moat and entering the gatehouse one passes the magnificent heavily-studded, oak-panelled Tudor door which survives from 1530. The homely rooms within are filled with interesting furniture, tapestries, artefacts and books and the room guides were particularly eager to talk about the details and answer questions. A special feature throughout the house is the heraldic window glass; also the many watercolours painted by Rebecca Ferrers (1830 – 1923) a former resident.

The Ferrers were an ancient Norman family. Often short of money, the house passed from father to son for twelve generations. They were also a Catholic family who adhered steadfastly to the old religion after the Reformation and although denied high office generally avoided persecution. In the 1590s the house became a refuge for Jesuit priests and a number of hiding places survive from that era. In a corner of the kitchen is a glass panel in the floor revealing the medieval sewer, which runs the whole length of the West range. The section below the panel was the principal priests' hole and in his autobiography Father John Gerrard gives a harrowing account of an incident in 1591 when he and eight other priests and laymen hid in there for four hours, standing with their

feet in water whilst priest hunters searched the property. Baddesley Clinton was restored in the 1940s with the specific intention of passing it into the care of the NT but, due to the insufficient funds, the plan was put on hold for 10 years. Eventually, the property plus 12 acres of land was handed over for the permanent preservation and opened to the public in 1982. It is a fascinating place with a rich and varied history. Our thanks must go to Rose for a splendid day out and for her meticulous planning.

Margaret Thorley.

Wednesday 26th September 2007. Car Outing to Loton Park, Alberbury near Shrewsbury.

Driving through the gates and past the ruined castle of Alberbury on our right, we drove to the crescent shaped buildings in the distance. **Loton Park** looked impressive.

We were ushered through the small hall-way lit by sun flower stained glass windows into a large Victorian ballroom. Before us was a lavish spread of cakes and biscuits to be consumed with our morning drinks. The room was light and airy with a stage at one end and a staircase leading to the main house at the other. There were two Pritchard fireplaces, many family heraldic banners and antlers from the deer park on the walls. Most unusual was the family motto, *Dread Shame*.

In this setting Sir Michael Leighton and his two sisters welcomed us into his family home. He briefly told us about the three phases of its building. From the outside the hall looked totally integrated with its mellow red brick and stone.

Our group was split into two, Judy Leighton led our group up the stairs and into the older part of the hall. She had been born here, and as she took us through the many rooms and corridors, she narrated personal stories connected with her upbringing and people in very high places. For instance, we saw her nursery where she had been educated by no fewer than fourteen governesses; we saw her wardrobe of children's clothes kept in pristine condition, and we saw a menu of a dinner served in 1933.

The elegant, mainly panelled staterooms were filled with family portraits, three of which were painted by Reynolds. Sadly the family had to sell treasures by Lord Leighton, Reynolds and Turner, after the collapse of Lloyds. Many paintings had been executed by Mary Leighton, Judy's grandmother. The furniture here was priceless. Noticeable were the family crests of the wyvern on the backs of the dining room leather chairs. Silver and pewter adorned the rooms. From each window was a superb view, either across the Severn valley or across the lawned gardens. In contrast we were taken below stairs to see the

unmodernised, cold utility rooms full of paraphernalia of earlier living - a room of old coats of Sir William, his boots, a billiard room with games and sporting tackle, the kitchen and larder where he kept his preserves, and a neatly piled stack of wood for the oncoming winter. Here a pillar supported the dining room floor above - it proved to be so effective that there was a hump in the floor beneath the fine dining room table. Finally some of us climbed the stairs to the modernised private wing where Sir William regaled us with stories of the supernatural.

As our two-hour tour came to a conclusion we were most surprised to find the ballroom still laid with refreshments for us. Here our leader, Peter Moxon, paid tribute to our hosts for a most fascinating tour of Loton Hall.

On leaving, some of us visited the **Parish Church**, where we saw the family chapel with the cross made of aeroplane propellers and the Lutyens memorial to Sir William's uncle who had died in the first world war in France. He was just one of a family who had given distinguished service to the country over past years.

Mavis E Smith

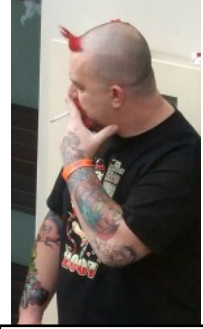
October 5th - 8th 2007. London Holiday - In the Shadow of the Gherkin.

It seemed strange to us comparative newcomers to be going on a NT holiday NOT organised by Penny Moore. But David and Cynthia Dumbelton quickly had us settled and on our way. By the time we reached the **Royal Standard of England**, England's oldest freehouse, near Beaconsfield, for an excellent light lunch in sun-bathed surroundings, it was clear that we were all in for a grand weekend. The landlord and present owner gave us an impromptu talk of nearly 1000 years history of the place. Starting as a Saxon alehouse, later allegedly the place of an illicit love tryst for Charles II (in a room only accessible by ladder), it has been modified by nearly every owner, each leaving his mark. None of the many ghosts appeared to greet us so we headed on for London.

David continued to entertain us with information and amusing anecdotes about the many places we passed en route. The party warmed especially to the story of the block of flats we passed. This was where David and Cynthia lived, each in flats only separated by the rubbish chute, and so they met and love blossomed.....

Our hotel was every bit as good as the publicity had promised, but we didn't have long to linger before we were on our way out to the **Whitechapel Bell Foundry**.

Our tour was led by the owner, Alan Hughes. He soon had our heads ringing with facts about bells; how they are cast, pitched, tuned with 5 or 15 harmonics. Their largest church bell could weigh 6½ tons and the smallest of the handbells was about the size of a sewing thimble. The casting process uses traditional methods including moulds lined with a mixture of sand, clay, goats' hair and horse manure. Why goats' hair and horse manure? – “Because that's how the monks did it 1000 years ago and because it works” (technically it vents the moulding operation during casting).



TATTOOS GALORE

The group was especially interested in Alan's explanation of recent work done on Big Ben, the largest bell ever made there. When he showed us some of the current work in progress one of our party, Eunice Mortimer, recognised the oldest bell. It came from the church where she was married and her father was churchwarden for many years (see photo on front cover). We had a lovely buffet meal and as a special planned extra Alan's daughter played the piano while we ate to entertain us.

Early the next morning we had an unplanned extra as we found we were sharing the hotel with people attending the 3rd International London Tattoo Convention and we were breakfasting with some well-decorated men and women.

We toured **Spitalfields** with Blue Badge guide Sarah Fordham. She explained and showed us that Spitalfields was the area east of the City where immigrants settled. We saw houses built by the Huguenot silk weavers, fleeing religious persecution in Catholic France, and the chapel in Brick Lane built by them to convert the Jewish immigrants. It has since been a Synagogue and is now a Mosque serving the thriving Bangladeshi population in the area. **Brick Lane** is also known as the Curry Capital of London.



Dennis Severs's House, was it a museum or just a period house we were visiting unannounced and seeing the rooms that the occupants had just left? There was no commentary and we were asked to go round in silence and use our imaginations. The incredibly cluttered house, each room based on a different historic period, was very different to the usual NT fare. As we drifted

off to find lunch there was another ‘surprise’ as Dan Cruickshank walked down the road.

The evening trip included a tube ride through **Docklands** to Islands Gardens where we stood and looked at the famous view of **Greenwich**. We had already seen the Gherkin close up (its recent sale for £600m gave its owners a 50% profit). It and the numerous new and refurbished buildings stood as tributes to the commercial success of the city.

We dined at the **Prospect of Whitby**, which provided not only an excellent meal but had prepared a short history for members to take away and read at leisure. The nearby old **Hydraulic Pumping Station** had been turned into a restaurant with tables between the heavy machines and the smell of garlic replacing the older industrial smells. Its modern art expo of Cold War scenes left members puzzled.

Sunday morning choices – **St Paul’s**, markets, **Millenium Bridge**, **Tate Modern**, walk along the Thames and then all were off to the **Geffrye Museum**. Here rooms were set out in progressing time periods, laid out with explanations and commentary. It was a complete contrast to Dennis Severs’s house.



St Paul's from The Tate Modern

The **canal trip** was enjoyable in itself but it also gave a vivid contrast to the rich and bustling buildings we had seen in the city. A reminder that the docks and the waterways were once as important to the wealth of the capital as are now the banks and commercial enterprises – old water way in the heart of the new city.

Setting off early on Monday morning we were quickly stuck in London traffic. Our heroic leaders again entertained us, helped occasionally by Peter Wilson, with further commentary on all we passed and saw.

Eton, a famous school started by King Henry VI as a place of education for poor but bright pupils, has lost any sign of poverty now. We had a wonderful tour of the ornate affluence of the place and its modern traditions and language that contrasted with its early roots as a royal endowed school for poor children. After lunch many managed a short doze as we headed back to Newcastle. On behalf of the group Colin thanked David and Cynthia for all their hard work, Dave for his great driving, and everyone that made it such a pleasurable group to be a part of.

Oh. And I nearly forgot – is it David’s side or Dave’s side off first? – and does it matter?

John Beaumont

Saturday 20th October 2007 Coach Outing to Manchester Art Gallery – *Art Treasures in Manchester 150 years on.*

After a straightforward journey in glorious autumn sunshine, we greatly enjoyed the delicious scones and coffee or tea in the attractive café. We were then given a brief, informative introduction to the current exhibition and the setting up of the original one in 1857. We then took our time exploring the wonderful examples of paintings, ceramics and metalwork retrieved from public and private collections for this anniversary reconstruction, at least of part of the 1857 exhibition. I found the sections showing what Manchester was like at the time particularly interesting, because my great grandfather was married in Manchester in that year. The section describing the conception and spectacular execution of the project was fascinating, especially as it was all organised in only fourteen months. It was amazing to imagine the special trains carrying workers from Sheffield, Preston and Saltaire.

The selection of exhibits from the original displays were amazing: you rounded a corner to see Michelangelo's 'Madonna and Child'. Or Constable's 'Boat Passing a Lock', Turner's 'Dunstanborough Castle', Landseer's beautifully painted dogs in 'Dignity and Impudence', Jan Steen's chaotic 'Village School', to mention only a few masterpieces. Then there were the early photographs, Lucretia Borgia's mirror, the intricately designed metalwork of the 'Cellini shield', ceramics, enamels, jewellery, furniture, all very well displayed. An enjoyable touch was the audio collection of songs and music from the time.

After a very good soup from the gallery café, we went to the John Rylands Library, to see the new extension and the exhibition of documents pertaining to the art exhibition. I found a letter from Mrs Gaskell very amusing: she complained that she had too many guests staying with her, and therefore had to keep returning to see the same paintings. A very enjoyable day. Many thanks to Penny Moore for organising it.

Kay Williams.

Thursday 25th October - talk by Geoffrey Smith: Behind the Scenes at the Chelsea Flower Show

We saw not only 'behind the scenes' but in front also as **Geoffrey Smith** used his extensive slide collection to show the annual transformation of the Chelsea site. The tennis courts and children's playground are dug up and the turf stripped and rolled up so that builders and joiners can turn a level park into a landscape that will become a series of gardens. We saw many 'before and after' slides as mounds of earth became cottage gardens with streams and rockeries, or elegant formal layouts with modern water features. The displays of shrubs

and flowers inside the huge tents were pictured, too, and we were given some insights into what goes into preparing these magnificent shows, and some of the problems and disasters which have to be overcome. Photos of famous visitors, including the Queen, were followed by those of keen gardeners who had bought the displays on the last day and were struggling to carry enormous plants or manoeuvre trees onto London buses to get home! Finally all is demolished, the turf replaced and the park restored for the benefit of the local people.

Geoffrey Smith, himself a grower, judge and gold medal winner at Chelsea for 23 years, amused and informed his audience and the enthusiastic applause clearly showed how much we had enjoyed his presentation.

Paul Anderton

Saturday 3rd November Ramble “Country Parks and Biddulph Grange”

Following several days of brilliant autumn sunshine, 9 brave souls set off in damp misty drizzle (or drizzly mist) from **Greenway Bank Country Park** (near to Biddulph) in the direction of Biddulph Grange. Despite the change in weather, accentuated as the mist dripped steadily from the trees, we were not disheartened, and enjoyed the colourful leafy splendour of Greenway Bank. Our Leader, Richard Adams, explained the history of the park and its pools, which serve the Cauldon Canal, and the legend of **Gawton’s Well**, its setting even more eerie (and damp) than usual.

We strode purposefully along the by-ways of Biddulph Moor, notable for its rocky outcrops, and reputed to be populated by descendants of the Saracens, most of whom seemed to have taken to the by-ways by car. Although the mist prevented us from enjoying views of Biddulph, Mow Cop and beyond, we were able to admire the many bonfires still being built, and wonder how they could possibly be dry enough to be set alight by 5th November.

In no time, it seemed, we were descending through the autumnal glades of **Biddulph Grange Country Park**, which adjoins the gardens, and arrived at the NT tea room in good time to enjoy hot drinks and lunch. By this time the sun was shining again, and Richard’s timetable, which proved to be precisely accurate, allowed a quick visit to the gardens, in all their autumn glory. Open at weekends only during November and early December, they are well worth a visit at this time of year.

We then returned to Greenway Bank, having now gained a tenth brave soul, around the western side of Biddulph, from where we had a clear view of the places we had passed through that morning. Undeterred by the changeable climate, we very much enjoyed our walk, and those of us who were unfamiliar

with the area appreciated the chance to see a different approach to Biddulph Grange.

Thank you, Richard, for another enjoyable ramble; we are looking forward to being led by you again, and hope that next time there will be even more of us following your lead.

Peter Wilson

Wednesday 7th November - talk by David Watts: From Blackboard to Black and White

What a surprise awaited me when David Watts began his talk - he started his teaching career at Great Marlow, Bucks - a place well known to me from my youth - friends and I often cycled to Marlow to swim in the River Thames - but I had to put my memories aside to listen to the very enthusiastic and entertaining talk about David's experiences in changing careers from teaching to the National Trust.

His experiences with parties of school children were well illustrated (verbally) - first in France with a visit to D-Day beaches and cemeteries, and then with his description of some older girls in writing a play about an incident in the apprentice house - "Hetty, Esther and Me" - they had been very impressed by the social conditions and attitudes of the early 1800's.

His description of work at Little Moreton Hall was entertaining - I hadn't realised the very large goldfish in the moat were often mistaken for Koi - a very expensive fish. The delights of cooking on a Monday and Tuesday and the ever-present fear of fire in a timber framed building. On the subject of ducks I suggest David contacts Trentham Gardens - they seem to have solved the problem of Canada geese!

An entertaining and informative, or should I say educational evening.

Arthur Slight

Luncheon Club. 12th Sept, 10th Oct & 14th Nov 2007

The newly formed **Luncheon Club** is undoubtedly a huge success with up to 20 members attending each of the first three luncheon venues which were: the **Dog and Doublet**, Sandon, **The Hand and Trumpet**, Wrinehill and the **Bleeding Wolf**, Scholar Green. This excellent concept was designed as an opportunity for members to meet friends and make new ones in convivial surroundings and the concept worked! The standard of the food, in my opinion, in the 3 inns (and we all have different tastes!) varied from satisfactory to excellent. Inns are designed to be cosy and intimate serving



a few people at a time as they enter. When 20 people arrive at the same time service can be a little slow but this is understandable and did not detract from very enjoyable lunches. For exactly the same reasons it was, generally, not possible to seat every one at one large table, which may have added to the conviviality, had it been possible.

To prove, if any proof was needed, how excellent the experiences were, on each occasion members were still at their tables chatting away well after the last course had been served. They had to be almost ushered off the site so that the staff could prepare for the evening opening! Many thanks go to Mary Malcolm for being bold enough to run the Luncheon Club, for her detailed research into which pubs were worth a visit and then for making the arrangements with the pub staff for the actual visit. Mary has a few more hostelryes lined up for the spring so make sure to book early to guarantee a place – you will not be disappointed!

Peter Thompson



SPRING PROGRAMME

Tuesday, January 15th 8.00pm North Staffs Conference Centre

Talk by KATHERINE FRANK: THE HISTORY OF CRUISING.

Enjoy a New Year cruise as we hear the fascinating story of the development of what was once a luxury form of travel, limited to the wealthy few, but which is now a popular way to see the world. Katherine Frank, from Leek, who has written several biographies of world figures, and who is also a lecturer on cruise ships, will illustrate the growth and change of this type of holiday and give us a first-hand account of some of the present-day ships. She has travelled to India, the Bahamas and other exotic locations during her working life and in pursuit of her researches, and we can enjoy some 'armchair travelling' in her company.

Wednesday January 16th 2008 Coach Outing to Chetham's Library Manchester (Maximum 30 people - IMMEDIATE BOOKING NEEDED)

This is a repeat visit to Chetham's and those people who were not able to join the group last year will be given priority.

Chetham's is a long established co-educational independent school at the forefront of musical education in the UK and abroad. Entry is selective and is

based on musical expertise. It is also one of the highest ranked independent schools for GCSE and A-level.

Our afternoon visit, beginning at 1.35pm, will consist of a concert given by students in the school library. After a short break when tea, coffee and biscuits will be served, there will be a conducted tour of the buildings lasting about 45 minutes. The library is situated on the first floor of the building and is unfortunately not accessible to anyone using a wheelchair or with severe walking difficulties.



The morning will be spent at leisure in Manchester.

Depart 9.30am from School Street. Return approx. 6pm.

Cost £16.00 to include coach, gratuities, light refreshments at Chetham's, concert and tour of the buildings.

Please apply to Mrs J Scholes, 47, Sandon Road, Cresswell, Stoke-on-Trent. ST11 9RB Tel: 01782 398545 enclosing Stamped Addressed Envelope.

Closing date for applications Monday January 9th 2007 URGENT BOOKING REQUIRED.

Wednesday, January 23rd Luncheon Club Meeting The Swan, Woore A51

A comfortable old pub with parking on opposite side of the road. 12.30 for 12.45pm (Max 20). Roast Beef or Vegetarian option/Apple Crumble or Bread & Butter pudding £8.95 Drinks and coffee extra. Please give your choice when you book.



Wednesday, February 6th 8.00pm North Staffs Conference Centre

Talk by MARGARET GLEAVE: VAGRANT WOMEN or MOTHERS in ISRAEL.

Margaret Gleave, a historian from Betley, has spent many years studying aspects of Methodism and particularly Primitive Methodism, which has many of its roots in this area. 2007 was the 200th anniversary of the birth of Primitive Methodism and the talk will focus on enquiring into the lives of itinerant women preachers of the Primitive Methodist tradition in the early 19th century. Margaret has long been connected with the Englesea Brook Chapel, which is now a museum devoted to the history of Primitive Methodism, and for much of that time she was the education officer who 'taught' visiting parties of school

children in the manner of a Victorian Sunday School teacher! Her subject also has literary connections as there is an interesting portrayal of such a woman preacher in George Eliot's novel 'Adam Bede'.

Monday, February 11th Evening Car Outing C.C.T.V. Parking and Security, The Regent Centre, Regent Road, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent. Maximum 20.

This is a repeat visit, as the visit in February 2007 proved so popular. Priority will be given to those members who were unable to visit last time.



The tour of the Regent Centre will last about an hour and will include a video film presentation. Members should arrive at the Centre not later than 6.30pm. There is limited parking on the forecourt, otherwise there is ample Pay and Display Car Parking adjacent to the centre.

The Regent Centre is situated on the corner of Regent Road and Hinde Street in Hanley, opposite the Hawksmoor Inn.

Cost £4.00. Apply to Peter Moxon, Millstone House, Butterton, Newcastle, Staffordshire ST5 4EB Tel: 01782-616337 enclosing Stamped Addressed Envelope.

Closing date for application – Wednesday 30th January 2008.

Thursday 14th February Coach Outing to Harley Gallery, Welbeck and Denby Pottery Centre

Welbeck Abbey near Mansfield, Nottingham, is the home of the Cavendish family and although the Abbey is not open to the public, we have arranged a private visit to the impressive Harley Gallery on the estate, a modern, award-winning craft gallery and museum, built on the site of the nineteenth century Gas Works for the Welbeck estate. The museum houses a permanent collection of some of the treasures of the Cavendish family and after coffee and biscuits on arrival (cost included) we shall have a talk by the museum Director, Derek Adlam, about the current exhibition 'The Duchess of Curiosities'. This includes the Barberini or Portland Vase which was bought by Margaret, Duchess of Portland, the famous eighteenth century collector who spent her life amassing the curiosities which she called the Portland Collection. After the talk there will be an opportunity to see the display. We shall then have a buffet lunch (cost included) and possibly a chance to visit the Farm Shop which sells estate produce and the Dukeries Garden Centre, both on the same site.

At 2.30pm the coach will take us to the Denby Pottery Visitor Centre, where there is an extensive range of shops selling excellent homewares, gifts, kitchen and garden items, etc. and a restaurant where members can buy refreshments. We shall leave at 4.30pm.

This will be a good opportunity for a day out in winter, when we can be wholly under cover if the weather is inclement, but stroll outside if fine.

Depart School Street 9.30am, return 5.30pm approx. Cost £20 (non-members £21) includes coach, coffee, lunch, talk, gratuities.

Please apply to Mrs. A. Anderton, 14, Berne Avenue, Newcastle, Staffs ST5 2QJ
Tel: 01782 613024 enclosing Stamped Addressed Envelope. Closing date for applications - Monday Feb 4th.

Thursday, February 28th Luncheon Club Meeting: The Greyhound, Yarlet A34

Large heated conservatory. Ample parking at rear. 12.30 for 12.45pm (Max 20). Roast Lamb or Steak and Kidney Pie or Vegetarian option/Treacle Pudding or ice cream £6.95 Drinks and coffee extra. Please give your choice when you book.



Tuesday, March 11th 8.00pm North Staffs Conference Centre Talk by JANE BRADNEY: FOLLIES and GROTTOS

We go out and about for this month's talk as Jane Bradney, a garden historian from Ross-on-Wye, will show us slides of many different follies and grottoes. Jane is currently doing research into aspects of garden history and design at Bristol University. Most of her examples are to be found in England and illustrate the English love of eccentricity as well as an aspect of design which was popular mainly in the 18th century, but she will also show us some notable examples from abroad. No knowledge of gardening is needed to enjoy this lively presentation, but you might have your appetite whetted to visit some of these quaint features where they are still open to the public!

Thursday, March 27th Luncheon Club Meeting: The Holly Bush, Salt A51 past Sandon, right - hand turn signposted.

Informal family-run rural pub with well deserved reputation for good locally-sourced food. Order on the day from menu which includes "light" meals. 12.15 for 12.30pm (Max 20).



Tuesday 8th April 2008 Coach Outing to Belvoir Castle and Woolsthorpe Manor

Belvoir has been the home of the Dukes of Rutland for nearly 1000 years. The present castle, built in the early 19th century, is renowned for its magnificent staterooms and art collections, its gardens and its splendid views. A wide range of refreshments is available, and there are facilities for picnics.

After lunch we shall drive to Woolsthorpe Manor, the birthplace and home of Sir Isaac Newton, (NT cards required). It was here that he performed his early experiments in optics and in the plague years wrote the “Principia Mathematica”. A tree in the orchard is claimed to be a descendant of the famous apple tree. The house, furnished as a typical 17th century yeoman farmer’s house, contains memorabilia of Newton, and there is a hands-on science exhibition in a barn. Our visit is on a day when the house is not open to the general public, and we shall have guided tours in small groups.

We depart from School Street at 9.30am and should be back in Newcastle by 6.30pm.

Cost, including coach, admissions, guided tour at Woolsthorpe, afternoon tea and driver’s gratuity, £22.50 (non-members £23.50).

Please apply to Mr K.Walker, 49,Stockwood Road, Newcastle ST5 3LQ Tel 613813 enclosing a Stamped Addressed Envelope. Closing date for applications is Thursday 20th March.

Tuesday 22nd April Car Outing to Apedale Heritage Centre, Loomer Rd, Chesterton, Newcastle, Staffordshire (40 members max)

An opportunity for members to experience first hand the appalling conditions in which colliers mined coal. Apedale Mine is a footrail where the coal is reached by means of an incline, rather than a vertical shaft.

Members will be underground in complete darkness, save for pit helmet lamps worn by each member for approximately one hour. They will be guided by an experienced miner who will explain the day to day operations of the mine as members walk through an actual coalseam that was once the daily workplace for many hard working miners. The guide will tell members about machinery, the dangers, the friendships and hardships of working underground.

The safety of visitors is paramount. Members will be required to wear a pit helmet with lamp and a battery on a belt around the waist and a yellow waistcoat. Members should wear strong shoes and warm clothing, not your Sunday Best! Due to current mine regulations smoking materials, battery

operated equipment, such as cameras, watches, and mobile phones are not allowed underground, but may be safely left in the lamproom.

Members should note that they will enter the mine down a slope of approximately 1 in 4 with a good handrail but a loose and uneven surface. The surface levels out underground but remains loose and uneven.

Members must heed the instructions of the guide throughout the tour.

Members will tour the mine in groups of ten at intervals, and in the meantime members may visit the very interesting museum, café and shop.

In planning this visit Peter has been down the mine on two occasions and he thoroughly enjoyed each visit. He looks forward to another visit. The mine is manned by a team of dedicated volunteers.

Members should arrive at Apedale Heritage Centre not later than 10.00am. Directions on application. Members may buy refreshments at their own cost.

Cost £5.00 per member to include entry to museum, refreshments are at own cost.

Apply to Peter Moxon, Millstone House, Butterton, Newcastle, Staffordshire ST5 4EB Tel: 01782-616337 enclosing Stamped Addressed Envelope.

Closing Date for applications Friday 11th April 2008.

Sunday 27th April Ramble “Norbury and beyond”

A gentle 6-mile figure-of-eight walk starting and finishing at Norbury Junction canal marina. Highlights along the way include the last remaining telegraph bridge on the English canal system, Loynton Moss SSSI (1,000+ species of flora and fauna to spot!), and a refreshment stop at the Anchor Inn (“possibly the best pub in the world”).

We will meet at 11.30 in the morning at the Junction Inn, where we have tables reserved for a well-earned Sunday carvery lunch on our return at 2.30pm.

This walk will suit most walkers. Well-behaved dogs and children are always welcome.

Cost £1 for members, £1.50 for guests (pay on the day).

Non Walkers are welcome to join for lunch - please advise Richard Adams.

Apply to Richard Adams, Gables End, Holly Bank, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 8FT.
Tel 01782 646054 Please enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope.



Summary of 2008 Spring Programme

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Tuesday 15th Jan | Talk: by Katherine Frank |
| Wednesday 16th Jan | Chetham's Library Manchester |
| Wednesday 23rd Jan | Lunch Club The Swan, Woore |
| Wednesday 30th Jan | Hallé Concert (fully booked) |
| Wednesday 6th Feb | Talk by Margaret Gleave |
| Monday 11th Feb | CCTV Centre, Hanley |
| Thursday 14th Feb | Welbeck Abbey/Denby Pottery |
| Thursday 28th Feb | Lunch Club Greyhound, Yarlet |
| Tuesday 11th March | Talk by Jane Bradney |
| Thursday 27th Mar | Lunch Club Holly Bush, Salt |
| Tuesday 8th April | Coach Outing to Belvoir Castle and Woolsthorpe Manor |
| Tuesday 22nd April | Apedale Heritage Centre |
| Sunday 27th April | Ramble - Norbury Junction |
| Dates for Your Diary | |
| Wednesday 14th May | Car Outing to Cosford Air Museum |
| Tuesday 20th May | AGM |
| Wednesday 21st May | Car Outing Willey Park |
| Saturday 28th June | Coach Outing to Bridgenorth and Severn Valley Railway |
| Sunday 27th July | Stokesay Court (of the film "Atonement" fame) |
| Tuesday 29th July | Car Outing to Tamworth |
| Tuesday 5th Aug. | Coach Outing to Browsholme and Stoneyhurst School |
| Thursday 21st Aug. | Car Outing to Hawkstone Park |
| Friday 12th Sept | Coach to Ludlow Food Festival |

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