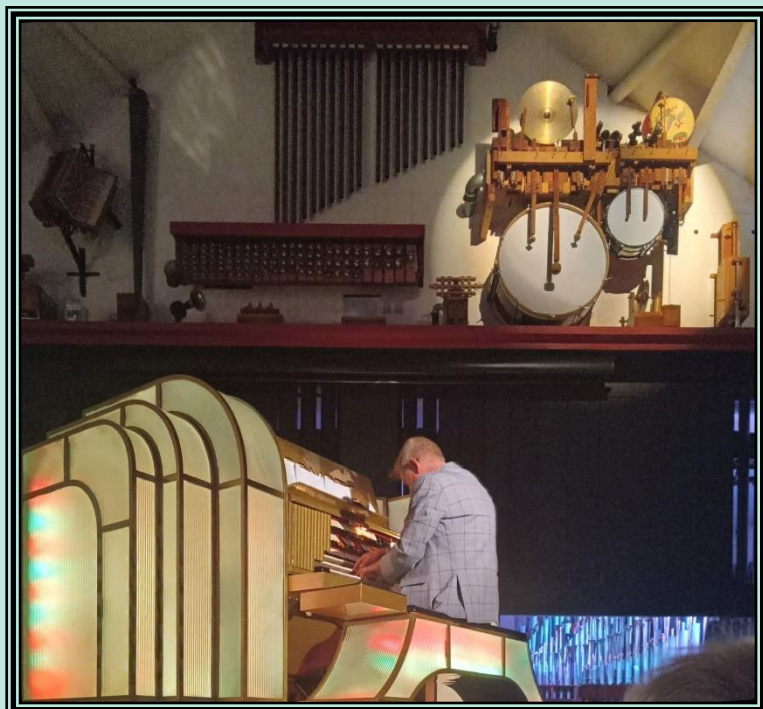


North Staffordshire National Trust Association

Newsletter No. 124
Winter-Spring 2023
www.northstaffsnt.org.uk



Robert Wolfe playing the ex-ABC Cinema, Derby, Compton organ at Pipes in the Peaks © Hazel Glover

Arrangements for Trips

Coaches now depart promptly from **Brunswick Street** at the front of the Jubilee Baths. **The car park on School Street is now short stay.** The nearest long stay car park is the public car park next to the Borough Arms Hotel. We do not pick up members en route.

Please send a separate cheque, with the event name on the reverse, and a stamped addressed envelope 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 National Trust Association". 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 personal accident insurance arranged by the Association through the Trust no longer has an age limit. Our public liability insurance also covers members at any age.

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, with apologies for failure to acknowledge any, particularly if sent by post.

Copy and correspondence for the next issue, due for publication in April, should be addressed to newsletter@northstaffsnt.org.uk (01782 791360) by the **15th March** at the absolute latest (but earlier if possible!)

Printed by Colourimage Printers, High Wycombe (01494 52999) colourimage@aol.com



North Staffordshire National Trust Association

Newsletter No. 124 Winter-Spring 2023 Programme

As usual *The Note from The Chair* arrived at the very last minute. However, unfortunately, this time Ralph seems to have sent his note for the Newsletter to the North Pole and his letter to Father Christmas to me. As there was no time to alter things, I have printed what I was sent. Editor.

A Note From The Chair

Dear Father Christmas,

I hope you and Mrs. Christmas are well. I don't want to burden you further as things must be difficult, what with heating premises near The North Pole and the extortionate cost of reindeer feed now.

However, as I have been good this year, could I ask a special favour with regard to my presents? I should be so grateful if you could find it in your powers to have your elves deliver the following:

1. Please send me a Vice Chair at least as good as the retiring one.
2. Please could you have a word and find us a Talks Organiser.
3. Please send Marion some more volunteers to help with events.
4. Please send us some Speakers and Coach Operators who don't charge the earth.
5. Please could you put a note in the stockings of about 100 really friendly people in North Staffordshire telling them that a warm welcome awaits at NSNTA.
6. Please put something extra nice under the trees of the Committee, planning helpers and supportive members, (Huw says he will pay), as trust me they have been really good this year.

Thank you, and Very Best Wishes for the New Year to Everyone in Lapland and beyond.

Yours, 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.

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In order to comply with the terms of GDPR and to improve security and privacy, the following policies are being adopted with particular reference to the publishing of details of members organising events. Full leaders' postal addresses will only appear on the booking forms and not in the main text of the magazine, which will just carry email addresses and telephone numbers. The booking forms are included in Newsletters distributed to bona-fide members of NSNTA but will not be contained in copies of the Newsletter posted on the website. Access to back copies of the Newsletter on the website which contain leaders' addresses will be restricted by password, available to members on request.

Attendees of NSNTA events are advised that they may be included in group photographs for publication in the Newsletter or on the website, but they will not be named without their specific permission. If anyone does not want to appear in such photographs, please let the organiser or the editor know.

## *Forthcoming Events*

*All talks commence at 7:30 p.m. at the North Staffordshire Conference Centre (the Medical Institute), Hartshill Road, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 7NY unless otherwise stated.*

From time to time it becomes necessary to change details of an event or to announce updates to booking arrangements, availability etc. or to advise members of other matters that have arisen. To cover this, see the **STOP PRESS** feature on the website to be kept up to date.

### **Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> January: Talk: Sarah Moody - 'The Commonwealth War Graves Commission'.**

It isn't often that a talk comes as highly recommended by other groups as this one and so I was delighted to agree a date with Sarah Moody. Founded by Royal Charter in 1917 as the Imperial War Graves Commission, while World War I was still raging, and re-named in 1960, its principal function is to mark, record and maintain the graves and places of commemoration of Commonwealth servicemen and women who died in the two World Wars. It is currently responsible for the care of war dead at over 23,000 separate burial sites and the maintenance of more than 200 memorials world-wide. Join us to hear more about the work of this excellent organisation.

### **Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> February: Car Trip: Spitfire Gallery in the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery.**

The famous Spitfire of the second World War was designed by Reginald Mitchell (1895-1937), the one we shall see was built in 1945 in West Bromwich. In 1952 it was lost in fog in Hampshire then converted to a ground-based aircraft for training. In 1972, it was donated to the City of Stoke on Trent in memory of Reginald Mitchell. For 14 years it was housed in a glass house opposite the present library in Hanley, then moved to the museum in 1986. Since further restoration, it has been in a purpose-built gallery looking like an aircraft in a hangar. A Merlin engine is in the corner and there are lots of other items relating to the Spitfire.

We shall have a guided tour at 10.30 for an hour by Joseph Perry, who is Curator (Local History) at The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery. He was heavily involved in the project to restore and redisplay the Spitfire RW388, and in the creation of the new Spitfire Gallery. Joe also cares for the museum's social history and archaeology collections, including the Staffordshire Hoard.

Afterwards you can enjoy other parts of the museum or linger in the café for coffee or lunch. There are lifts to all areas of the museum.

The full address of the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery is: Bethesda Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, ST1 3DW. There are several car parks nearby.

Cost: £8, non-members £10. Please send your entry form to Anthea Bond as soon as possible. Replies and further instructions will be sent by email. Enquiries: [antheabond@hotmail.com](mailto:antheabond@hotmail.com)

Closing date for entries: Thursday 19 January.

### **Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> February: Talk: Hazel Griffiths - 'Grace Kelly'.**

Following her excellent presentation to the NSNTA in October 2021 about Eva Peron I was delighted to invite Hazel back to talk to us about another fascinating and controversial woman – Grace Kelly, otherwise known as Princess Grace of Monaco. Film star, princess and humanitarian, she was known as one of the most beautiful women in the world right up to her tragic death at the age of 52 following a car crash in 1982. Learn about her privileged upbringing, her career in Hollywood, marriage to Prince Rainier in 1956 and her sometimes fraught relationships with her three children and her charitable work in Monaco and with UNICEF and UNESCO.

### **Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> March: Talk: Dr. Peter Thomas - 'What have trees ever done for us?'**

What a wonderful title and no one is more qualified to tell us than Dr. Peter Thomas, Emeritus Reader in Plant Ecology at Keele University, Visiting Professor at the University of Alberta, Canada, and Bullard Fellow at Harvard University, USA. If that weren't enough, he has published three books on trees including 'Fire in the Forest' about the regeneration of trees after the sort of infernos that have become only too familiar on our TV screens in recent years.

Do not be put off by his academic honours and writing success. I'm told he is a tremendous speaker and could make loading a dish washer a fascinating topic!

### **Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> April: Talk:**

Due to our usual date not being available, we have booked the Wade Hall for Tuesday 11th April. Unfortunately, this has meant that our April speaker, Kath Reynolds, has had to cancel her presentation. Details about a replacement speaker will be announced at the talks in the New Year.

## Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> April: Walk: The Bluebells of Parrot's Drumble.

2-3 miles only, 3 stiles.

Start your St. George's Day with a short stroll through Parrot's Drumble.

I don't expect to see any parrots, but Staffordshire Wildlife Trust does describe this place as a hidden gem, with *possibly* (my italics) the finest display of bluebells in the county. We shall see. It is officially an Ancient Woodland, having been continuously covered by trees since at least the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Definitely a hidden place, where you soon forget how close you are to the Talke Industrial/Retail estate and indeed the busy A500 road.



The Parrot family were original owners of the land, and a drumble is of course the Staffordshire term for a stream running through a wooded valley. The stream itself still sometimes shows a brownish colour from iron oxide leaching from historic mining operations.

We will meet at 10.30 am on the car park of the Freeport Shopping Mall, and set off across a couple of fields and three stiles to the Drumble. A well-defined path winds through the valley, criss-crossing the brook. There are a few slopes, and it might be muddy at times, so I would recommend walking shoes.



We will be back at the Freeport Mall around noon, time for a coffee and a cake perhaps? There's also a café serving meals upstairs, and maybe a spot of outlet store shopping for you.

Suggested donation for the walk is £3.00. Children are welcome as always. Any dogs would need to stay on their leads throughout.

Please book your place with Richard Adams, by email to [rjadams@doctors.org.uk](mailto:rjadams@doctors.org.uk) or by post with an SAE to 79 Whitmore Road, Newcastle ST5 3LZ. Directions to the meeting point and suggested parking will be given on application.

## **Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> April: Car Trip: Staffordshire Museum Collection Stores, Beaconside Business Park, Stafford.**

This treasure trove of historical artefacts, costumes, photographs etc. will be available for us to see on a tour of its current home. Charles I's cap, a gentry family's 'blood wagon', unique photographs of Victorian Stafford Gaol, antique domestic appliances, an undertaker's unusual way of keeping his accounts and much, much, more. If you don't know what a 'follow me lads bonnet is', then come and see one for yourself.

This wealth of fascinating objects is housed in two large warehouses approximately two miles outside Stafford town centre and **full directions will be given on booking; parking is free of charge.** We will be served with tea/coffee/ biscuits on arrival and will then move around the store with an experienced and knowledgeable guide, looking at the costume, fine art and photograph collections before moving to the collections of domestic appliances on the mezzanine floor. There is no lift to the mezzanine floor but a film of this level is available to anyone who does not wish to take the stairs. We will then walk for a couple of minutes to the second store which displays the agricultural and transport collections. **The tour lasts around 2 hours so we shall meet at the entrance of the collections store by 10:30am.** Members can then visit a local hostelry for lunch afterwards if they wish.

Cost £5, non-members £6, includes access to both sites and tour guide, refreshments on arrival and donation to the National Trust.

Please apply using the booking form enclosing a cheque and SAE. Enquiries to Rose Wheat on 01782 616116 or [rose.wheat@virginmedia.com](mailto:rose.wheat@virginmedia.com).

**Prompt application is advised as the tour is restricted to 20 people.**

Please let Rose know if you are wishing to car share, either to offer or receive a lift.

## ***Advance Booking***

*Some events from the future programme need to be booked before, or very quickly after, the next Newsletter is published:*

## **Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> May: Coach Trip: Shrewsbury Guided Tour and River Trip.**

A guided tour around the town in the morning, followed by a restful river trip in the afternoon. Coffee/tea and biscuits in the Museum café before our tour.

Shrewsbury, birthplace of Charles Darwin, sits within a loop of The River Severn and is the setting for Ellis Peters' Cadfael series. It's a great place for shopping and spotting beautiful buildings down numerous, interesting alleyways.



Many of you will have visited the town but on our blue badge guided tour I'm sure we'll discover many historical facts and features that would otherwise pass us by.

The coach will leave Brunswick Street, Newcastle, promptly at 9:00 am and the tour starts at 11:00 and will last for roughly one and a half hours, so bring along your comfy walking shoes.

We will then have free time to lunch, at our own expense, in the numerous cafés and pubs around the Museum square, or even in Shrewsbury's award winning Market just below the square.

To end our day we head down to the river and board "Sabrina" for the 3 o'clock start of a pleasant, 45 minute guided cruise including, coffee/tea and biscuits, again.

Our day will end at 4pm, when the coach will be waiting to take us back to Newcastle, arriving at roughly 5.15-5.30.

Cost:£31.00 (£33.00 to non-members) to include the coach, driver's tip, coffee and biscuits, blue badge guides and the river boat trip.

Please apply by 19<sup>th</sup> April to Susan Till and include your cheque and SAE. Enquiries Tel. 01785 811794 or email at [st.till@icloud.com](mailto:st.till@icloud.com)

## **Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> May: Car Trip: Tissington Hall and Well Dressings.**

We have been fortunate in timing our trip to the early Jacobean Tissington Hall to allow us to visit the internationally famous Well Dressing, an ancient custom that is almost unique to Derbyshire. Tissington is known as 'the mother place of well dressing' and following our guided tour of the delightful manor house we shall have the opportunity to admire the intricate floral decorations of the six wells set around the picturesque estate village.

Tissington Hall is Grade II\* listed as are its gardens, stables and outbuildings and has been inhabited by the FitzHerbert family since it was built in the early seventeenth century. The history of the family and the house will be explained to us by enthusiastic and knowledgeable local guides and you will also be able to visit the Church of St. Mary with its Norman tower and FitzHerbert memorials.

There will be no difficulty finding somewhere to lunch (at own expense), as in addition to Herbert's Fine English Tearooms, situated close to the Hall, there are apparently fifteen other places to eat within five kilometres of the village.

We shall meet in front of the hall in order to start our tour at 10:30 prompt. Car parking is available in a large field at the top of the village and will cost £3 per car, the money raised goes to charity. Separate disabled parking is situated in the middle of the village. Directions will be dispatched on booking. There will be some stairs in the Hall and traffic/trip hazards within the village.

Cost: £15 per person (non-members £16) for the tour of the Hall and the usual contribution to the National Trust. Please apply, using the booking form, to Rose Wheat enclosing SAE and cheque before May 1st.. Enquiries: Tel. 01782 616116 or rose.wheat@virginmedia.com.

Please let Rose know if you are wishing to car share, either to offer or receive a lift.

### **Wednesday 21st June: Coach Holiday: Northumberland and Treasures.**

After the success of the New Lanark holiday organised in conjunction with Regent Travel, we were pleased to engage them once again to arrange a 4-nights/5-days trip to Alnwick in Northumberland. Details were circulated to members in order to secure a minimum number of bookings required by the hotel by the end of October. This was achieved so we can confirm the holiday is viable, but we really would encourage more people to join to make up the numbers. At the date of publication of this Newsletter there is one single room available, along with several twin and double rooms, but do please check on the website or with Regent Travel on 01785 818202.

A reminder that the £644pp holiday covers staying at the 3\* White Swan Hotel, Alnwick, visits to Durham, Alnwick Castle & Gardens, Lindisfarne, Bamburgh Castle, Cragside<sup>NT</sup> and the Roman Vindolanda Fort & Museum. If you don't have the brochure or booking form they can be downloaded from our website and also will be available at future NSNTA events, or phone Regent. Unless we are oversubscribed we expect to be able to admit members from other groups, or even non-NT members (subject to additional £23 for admission to NT properties).

### *Future Program*

The Pipes in the Peaks trip in September was well received, and Joan Harvey would like to know if there is sufficient interest to arrange a repeat visit next Summer. If you would welcome this, please contact her on 0781 491 8792 / 01782 392737 or email: joanharvey694@gmail.com.

Other trips at the planning stage are a coach trip to Boughton House, Kettering, Northants on 15<sup>th</sup> June, a coach trip to Frampton Court, Gloucestershire in July, a car trip to visit a Woodland Craftsman in August, a possible coach trip to Walsall Leather Museum and Art Gallery in September and a 3-day/2-night mini coach break in Salisbury 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> October.

# *Help!*

## **SITUATION VACANT**

The position of Talks Organiser will be vacant from May 2023 when Rose Wheat will be resigning. This is an interesting and essential post as the talks are well-attended and appreciated by our members. The organiser has, of course, the benefit of booking speakers on subjects which interest him/her. So that the new organiser does not feel over-whelmed, Rose will continue to book all the speakers up until December 2023 and is more than willing to meet up with anyone who is interested in taking over from her to go through the entire process and hand over her extensive file of potential speakers.

Please contact Rose on 01782 616116 or [rose.wheat@virginmedia.com](mailto:rose.wheat@virginmedia.com) for a chat or any member of the committee.

YOUR ASSOCIATION NEEDS YOU – if you are unable to help with the above there may be other ways in which you can help, with or without joining the committee.

## *Have Your Say!*

We thank some members for comments on how the interests of the Association may be advanced, and continue to seek members' views on the activities of the NSNTA. Do we have the right mix of events or are there other activities you would like to see included?

Please let the Programme Co-ordinator, the Editor or any member of the committee know your views, even if it's "no change" so we can get a balanced view, or if there is any other aspect of management of the Associations or even the National Trust as a whole that you would like to bring to their attention.

## *New Members*

We have pleasure in announcing and welcoming the following new members: Imelda Bennison, Peter and Margaret Simmons, Mr. and Mrs. Walsh, Tony and Avril Dodd. This takes our membership to 288.

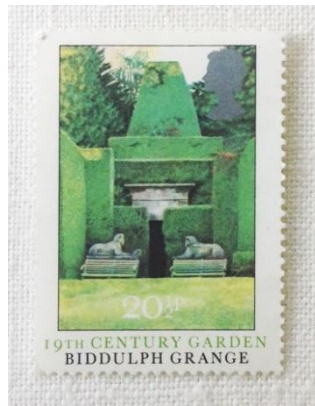
### ***NT Membership Discount***

A reminder that a discount on the general National Trust membership subscription is available to eligible members: 60 or over and having held an individual or joint membership for at least five of the last ten years.

To claim the concession, please call **0344 800 1895**. If you pay by Direct Debit, make sure you ring before your next payment date.

## Stamps

It is understood that the deadline for using plain stamps showing the profile of H M Queen Elizabeth II and the value of the stamp by the 31 January 2023 has been extended to the 31<sup>st</sup> July. These definitive stamps are the regular 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> class stamps and those that show any other value, with the head of the monarch, like the small stamps in the photos. The change-over to bar-coded stamps is not connected to the change in monarch, that will happen later.



Pictorial stamps will remain valid, including the popular Christmas stamps, those with a theme and those commemorating an event. Some National Trust properties have been featured over the years, one of Biddulph Grange is shown.

The Swap Out scheme can be used to swap unused definitive stamps for the new equivalent. These still show the Queen and at the side there is a bar-code. The edges continue to be perforated, like most other countries, with a larger perforation on the lower right corner to aid orientation. Britain is the only country in the world without showing its name.

The profile of the Queen was the work of Arnold Machin. He was born in 1911, one of a family of 12 children living in London Road, not far from the centre of Stoke. He trained as an artist at Minton, first in surface decoration then modelling with clay. He won a scholarship to the Royal College of Art and was elected a member of the Royal Academy in 1956 when working at Wedgwood. In 1963 he was the prize-winner for his low-relief sculpture of H M Queen Elizabeth II used on coins and, following this, the photograph of his ceramic relief sculpture was selected for stamps. The Queen is shown wearing the Diadem, like Queen Victoria on the Penny Black, rather than her tiara.

The first of the Machin definitive series were printed in 1967. It is estimated that 220 billion reproductions have been made of his work!

Anthea Bond

*Stories abound of returned stamps being 'lost in the post' or being declared forgeries so you are advised to use all stamps beforehand if at all possible.*



<https://www.postalmuseum.org/>

## *Reviews of Recent Events*

### **Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> August: Car Trip: "The Shirleys of Etruria" history walk and mill tour.**

A further 20 of our association gathered at The Etruria Industrial Museum, on the outskirts of Hanley, for this repeat visit. Previously held on a winter's day in January (a report of which was published in Newsletter No.122), this time the weather presented us with a very sunny and heady day which made it tricky (for me, at least) to concentrate on the story of the numerous generations of Jesse Shirleys. Nevertheless, our guides took us along a route that wove between areas we were familiar with and spots that we never knew existed. How the landscape of the area has changed over the years with "development" projects, but how nature continues on regardless; for example we saw that a colony of wild honey bees were using the old hollow drinking fountain in Etruria Park as their hive! Inside the bone and flint mill it felt as if transported back in time. However, many parallels could be made with today's modern pottery industry processes. Thank you for supporting the heritage volunteers who aim to educate and keep accessible the physical remains and workings of the mill. The steam engine is fired-up several times a year, the dates of which can be found on the website [www.etruriamuseum.org.uk](http://www.etruriamuseum.org.uk) together with a video of "Princess" in action.

*Helen Mansell*

### **Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> September: Walk around Barlaston.**

It was perfect walking weather for a totally relaxed stroll through the picturesque village of Barlaston with various points of interest to stop and admire. Janet was able to give us a little background information about many of them which was most enlightening.

Beginning and continuing at a leisurely pace, we climbed the hill and paused at the old Wedgwood Memorial College, which is now in a sorry state since having been closed down by Stoke-on-Trent Council in 2012. Walkers reminisced about having attended enjoyable courses here. We passed the "new" (now about 40 years old) St John the Baptist church which was built when Barlaston's old sandstone church was deemed to be suffering from subsidence and was therefore closed in 1980. Approaching the village green we admired the well-maintained memorial cross which stands near the front of the quaint former primary school, which later became a library and is now a private dwelling. Ambling on around the corner we came upon a Milk Barn at which you are able to buy the freshest of milk, an idea started in recent years during the coronavirus pandemic. The iconic "Threepenny bit" lodge

house welcomed us to a dapple shaded tree lined walk. It was interesting to learn this hexagonal building had once been used as a telephone exchange.



Exiting the shade, we approached the dolls' house style Barlaston Old Hall which was once sold for £1 and is now valued at around £2 million plus. The current owners are also renovating the old church which stands next door in its, likewise, well-kept grounds; and here there grows a fig tree bearing fruit!



What luck - we were able to pop inside the church and witness stonework and wooden beams being worked on, the plan being that, for example, wedding celebrations and concerts may be held here.



Sauntering on, the lane opened up to give far reaching views over to Hanchurch Woods and Mow Cop. Three small ponies were sleeping behind a fence, one whilst standing. We then walked down the hill admiring the view of the weeping willows edging the fishing pond. Much to the surprise of a few members that know Barlaston quite

well, we then walked around a second pond admiring the beautiful water lilies. Except for the friendly conversation of our group, it was all so tranquil. Emerging from the wooded path we traversed the Wedgwood sports pitches and arrived at The Oaks Wedgwood Park new housing estate which was developed on land sold by the floundering Wedgwood Company in circa 2010. This estate had to include starter homes but there are also 3/6 bedded luxury houses, of all varied designs. It seemed as if a piece of metropolis had invaded the country-side. Much to my surprise there



was a distinct lack of traffic on all the roads we walked along. After partaking of a coffee break at the Wedgwood museum we headed in our strung-out procession along a short stretch of canal towpath back to the Plume of Feathers pub where many of the group took lunch.

We'd been treated to a most delightful walk. Many thanks to Janet for a few hours of total relaxation (and also to John who'd helped with the recce, but who unfortunately could not be with us on the day).

*Helen Mansell*

## **Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September Coach trip: Port Sunlight and the Lady Lever Art Gallery.**

After a very sad few days with the news of the death of Queen Elizabeth II, the morning of the 15<sup>th</sup> was a bright and sunny September one, after a very comfortable coach journey we arrived at the Bridge Inn, Port Sunlight for a welcome tea/coffee and toilet break.

Refreshed we returned to the coach and were joined by a local guide, Peter, as we toured the village. He pointed out the various places of interest which we would be able to visit in the afternoon.



At the end of the tour, we were dropped off at the Port Sunlight Museum where we were able to gain a greater understanding of what William Lever envisaged for the village and the welfare of his workers. A number of us watched the film which put his vision in pictures showing that he had grown up with a keen social conscience strongly influenced by his father's Liberalism and non-conformity.



An interesting visit next door to the museum was the Edwardian Workers cottage which gave a very vivid picture of what life was like for the



families. Some of the items on display brought back memories of our earlier years of our parents' and grandparents' days, the Dolly tub and Mangle.

Back to the Bridge Inn for a very agreeable lunch, relatively quick service, good food and certainly value for money. This put us on track for an interesting afternoon to explore the other iconic buildings in the village.

On a personal note, after we had toured the village on the coach, I made a mental note of the Church which was signed as a United Reformed Church and learning that the Founder of Port Sunlight, William Hesketh Lever, who had the Church built in 1904 was a non-conformist, then little wonder it was originally built as a Congregational Church. My own Church Life started at a Congregational Church, which was originally built in 1906, which is now a United Reformed Church. The United Reformed Church is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary this year and as I write this article, which is the coming together of The Congregational Church in England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church in England.



On a visit to the Church in the afternoon I was pleased to learn that between 2007-2014 the Minister was a Rev Thomas Arnold Carmichael who had been the Minister at the Longton URC Church prior to coming to Port Sunlight. As a lover of Church-

Stained glass windows and a non-conformist I was pleased to see one of the windows which showed four famous theologians, Thomas Cranmer, John Robinson, Richard Baxter and John Wesley. The window was given 'In grateful memory of William Hesketh first Viscount Leverhulme and in Honour of those ideals of Christian Unity that were in His mind when He built and endowed this Church'.







We were enthralled at the extensive collection of art and antiques in the Lady Lever Art Gallery. Jane Mayer promised that we would see an impressive and wide-ranging collection, we were not disappointed. Thank you, Jane, for organising a wonderful and enlightening day.

*David Hood*

## **Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> September: Talk: Antony Dejak - 'Shropshire, Staffordshire and Cheshire Blood Bikes'.**



Whenever I turn on the TV these days there seems to be one horror story after another so the work of the Blood Bikes helped to restore my faith in human nature. In a fascinating and humorous talk, Antony Dejak took us through the history and the work of the SSCBB and enthralled his audience, who had many questions and donated over £130 to the group afterwards.

Not only do these volunteers have to pay an annual membership fee, and also for their training, but they have to buy their own equipment (leathers, helmet, phone etc.), everything in fact but the bikes themselves which are kept at a central location. They then provide a free service to the NHS carrying blood samples, placentas, bone marrow, medical notes, frozen breast milk, faecal matter, PPE and other specimens to wherever they are needed, when the NHS are unable to do it themselves. The charity is 100% funded by donations, legacies, supermarket collections and fees paid for giving talks such as this one. Last year the SSCBB members did 60,000 hours volunteering, this year the riders expect to do 340,000 miles, the running costs are around £71,000 a year, no wonder the National Association of Blood Bikes, comprising 32 groups in the UK, received the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, the equivalent of the MBE for voluntary groups. They certainly deserve it!

*Rose Wheat*

## Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> September: Car Trip: Pipes in the Peaks Organ Recital and Museum.

As the weather turned colder towards the end of September we headed off up into the Peak District, where we were to experience PIPES IN THE PEAK...and we had no idea what to expect!

Housed in an enormous garage was the ex-Derby Cinema Organ....the “Mighty Compton” and on arrival we were welcomed with a glass of wine! Over many years the owner has lovingly and painstakingly restored this instrument to its former glory...and more!....and as it rose up from below the stage many



of us were reminded of Reginald Dixon playing at Blackpool.

Robert Wolfe, celebrated organist, had travelled from Norfolk to play for us, and what an amazing performance he gave us.

Around the walls of the garage were countless percussion instruments, each one connected to the organ by cables, and as Robert played so the cymbals, drums, pipes, bells, horns and even model birds played in accompaniment! It proved difficult knowing where to look as the sounds were all around us, and in fact the enormous xylophone was suspended above our heads spanning the width of the building. We heard a wonderful mixture of well-known classical pieces, themes from radio



programmes, songs from famous musicals, along with nostalgic tunes from the 1930's and 40's. During a break for liquid refreshment we had the opportunity to see and hear the collection of antique mechanical musical instruments and then the show continued, providing us with yet more fabulous playing.



We rounded off the afternoon by joining in to sing our favourite wartime songs.. "packing up our troubles " and vowing to " meet again" !

Those of you who weren't able to be with us, missed an afternoon of great music and " togetherness " .....well, there's always another time.....

*Hazel Glover*

*Watch and hear resident organist Christian Cartwright playing the Yamaha AR100 organ and the 5-manual Compton on our website. See the note at the end of this section on how to view them.*

## **Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> October: Walk: Burston and Aston-by-Stone.**

The sun put in a welcome appearance as we met at the Greyhound Inn at Burston and, having placed our lunch orders, set off through the pretty village, with its pond and church and terraced houses, towards the canal. Here, stepping over the low, one-and-only stile, we joined the Trent and



Mersey Canal, heading in a North Westerly direction along the tow-path.

After a mile or so we caught a glimpse of Aston Marina on the other side of the canal, and then the only noticeable climb of the walk as we passed Aston Lock before leaving the tow-path at Aston Bridge.



Turning left, before passing St. Saviour's Church in Aston-by-Stone who noticed this scary effigy staring at us through the hedge? Taking the middle ground between the Anglican church and Holy Michael Archangel RC Church we ventured past Aston Hall, through the lanes by some luxurious properties to join the long straight path through very flat prairie-like fields. This led to a boardwalk over the wetlands and a footbridge over the

River Trent at Upper Burston Bridge before crossing the canal at the point where we joined it.



A short stretch took us back through the village of Burston to very welcome refreshment and lunch, after nearly 5 miles and climbing a whole 30 metres!



Thank you Richard for arranging the walk, and the weather – whilst the sun didn't manage to prevail all the way round, the rain held off and walking conditions were pleasant.

*John Spriggs*

## **Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> October: Talk: Steve Booth - 'Lidice 1942 - its destruction and the part played by Staffordshire people '**

I went along to the talk knowing very little of the great atrocity and act of revenge carried out by the Germans after the assassination of Reinhard Heydrich, a high ranking German SS and police official. The only other thing I knew was that there were two ways of saying the name of the town Lidice!

What a terrible episode in the history of war, not only the murder of all the men, women and children, but the flattening of all buildings, even down to digging up the cemetery and burning all remains. The three very brave Czech men who assassinated Heydrich trained here locally at Cholmondeley Castle, were also found and executed.

On hearing the fate of Lidice, (a mining town), the people of North Staffordshire, also a mining area, decided, with the local doctor and politician, Dr. Stross, to start a fund and £32,000 was collected toward the rebuilding of the town so it could be a living memorial to all those poor unfortunate souls. Money rolled in and a further £42 million was raised worldwide.

Czechoslovakia has never forgotten about our involvement, presenting our Mayor with a ceremonial key to the town, and giving us a small Pear Tree which grows in Hanley today, the root of which was the only thing left alive in Lidice.

Thank you to Mr. Booth for bringing it all to life, together with the part we played in its re-birth.

*Julia Davies*

### **Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> October: Car Trip: Staffordshire Wildlife Centre, Wolseley Bridge.**

For the second time in 2022, a group enjoyed the guided walk of the Centre with its warden, Mr Alex Rogers. We saw autumn work being done in various parts of the grounds. The grass had been mown to encourage the growth of wild-flowers in the spring and the apples had already fallen in the orchard. The riverbank had been adjusted to prevent further erosion. The Education Centre has huge tanks collecting water from the roof, as well as an interesting pond full of wildlife. Alex gave us an update on avian flu, with its rapid spread and severe effects.



Some paths have been resurfaced to allow easier access for buggies and wheelchairs. Ed Horton was able to join us with his mobility scooter on most of the paths and he took photos of the enthusiastic group in the rain.

*Anthea Bond*

## **Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> November: Talk: Andrew van Buren - 'My Magic Life in Showbiz'.**

An entertaining evening was enjoyed by all as Andrew told the fascinating story of his parent's, then his own, lives in show business. Fred Van Buren and his wife Greta worked for Walt Disney creating illusions for an ice show version of Snow White as well as with many stars of their day from Bob Monkhouse to Mike Yarwood, Little and Large and Diana Ross. Throughout his childhood, Andrew often used to help them in their act until he made his first solo appearance on stage at the age of 11 as a trick cyclist and juggler. He hit the big-time in World Expo 1992 at Seville where he met the Prince and Princess of Wales, later he worked before the late Queen Elizabeth at Buckingham Palace where he chatted to her and Prince Philip. During the 1990s he moved into magic and plate spinning, believe it or not, and regularly appeared on TV game shows whilst continuing to tour the world on cruise ships. His stories of bandits in Acapulco, snipers in the Middle East and the booking technique of Colonel Gaddafi's henchman enthralled his audience. Despite his peripatetic life, he has remained a local boy at heart and is currently much-involved in the Philip Astley project, an eighteenth century Newcastleian who founded the modern Circus, and continues to support the aims of The Grand Order of Water Rats, of which he is a proud member.

*Rose Wheat*

## **Wednesday 21st December: Christmas Lunch at Crown Wharf.**



We trust those who attended enjoyed their lunch at this attractive new canal-side enterprise. It is obviously too early to be able to report on this event – that will be in the next issue, but if you have any suitable photographs or comments you are willing to share, for this or any other event, do please send them in.



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Thank you to the following for photographs included in these articles: Anthea Bond, David Hood, Ed Horton, Hazel Glover, Richard Adams. These, along with many additional photos, can be viewed on our website to a larger scale. These now belatedly include photos from events covered by the last Newsletter, in particular the Scottish holiday to New Lanark Mills. On The Archive select 'A list of past outings and events'. Click on [Photos] where you see it against an event.

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Summary of Programme and Dates for your Diary	
January	
Tue 17 th	Talk: Sarah Moody - 'The Commonwealth War Graves Commission'.
February	
Wed 1 st	Car Trip: Potteries Museum & Spitfire guided tour.
Tue 21 st	Talk: Hazel Griffiths - 'Grace Kelly'.
March	
Tue 21 st	Talk: Dr. Peter Thomas - 'What have trees ever done for us?'.
April	
Tue 11 th	Talk: <i>TBA</i>
Sun 23 rd	Walk: The Bluebells of Parrot's Drumble.
Thu 27 th	Car Trip: Staffordshire Museum Collection Stores.
May	
Thu 11 th	Coach Trip: Shrewsbury Guided Tour and River Trip.
Tue 16 th	AGM and Talk.
Tue 23 rd	Car Trip: Tissington Hall and Well Dressings.
June	
Thu 15 th	Coach Trip: Boughton House, Kettering, Northants.
Wed 21 st	Coach Holiday: 4 nights/5 days Northumberland and Treasures.
July	
<i>TBA</i>	Coach Trip: Frampton Court, Gloucestershire.
August	
<i>TBA</i>	Car Trip: Visit to a Woodland Craftsman.
September	
<i>TBA</i>	Coach Trip: Walsall Leather Museum and Art Gallery.
October	
13 th – 15 th	Coach Trip: 2-day/3-night Mini Holiday to Salisbury.

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