

North Staffordshire National Trust Association

Newsletter No. 126

Autumn 2023

www.northstaffsnt.org.uk



Northumberland holiday group in the Olympic themed Swan Hotel, Alnwick

Arrangements for Trips

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

Please send a separate cheque, with the event name on the reverse, and a stamped addressed envelope of at least 8½" x 4" for each event applied for, even if it is with the same organiser. People wishing to sit together should complete one form.

Non-members travelling as members' guests pay an extra £2 for Coach Outings and £1 for car trips. If circumstances dictate they have lower priority booking.

Please make cheques payable to "North Staffs 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 National Trust makes insurance arrangements, including public liability insurance, for Supporter Groups that carry out volunteering/activities for the benefit of the National Trust.

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

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

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

The editor welcomes items of direct relevance to Association activities, and thanks all contributors, with apologies for failure to acknowledge any, particularly if sent by post.

Copy and correspondence for the next issue, due for publication in December, should be addressed to NSNTA.newsletter@outlook.com (01782 791360) by the **15th November** 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. 126 Autumn 2023 Programme

A Note From The Chair



I am writing this on St. Swithun's Day. As the legend says, "If on St. Swithun's day it pours, Ralph, you'd better stay indoors, finish your paragraph writing chores".

I don't know what the saint knew about the position of the jet stream, but apparently by the end of August when this programme is in its stride, the weather will be set fair for our events. The scope of them is as eclectic as The Staffordshire Museum stores (5th October).

From 19th Sept we can learn more about Kyrgyzstan so recently seen in Joanna Lumley's Spice Road TV series, and on Tuesday 21st November I can predict "The House will be nearly all paper that night!"

That reference, to paid up members of an audience or not, is my link to mention the Extraordinary General Meeting ahead of the programmed talk on 17th October. Members of the Association present will be able to decide whether membership of National Trust should be a precondition of being a member of the NSNTA or not.

Whatever the result do tell your friends about The Association and consider how you could help us progress rather than retrench.

Best Wishes

Ralph

[Important: We need your feedback – see centre pages.]

Data Protection Policy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## *Forthcoming Events*

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

Some events need to be booked very quickly, some do book up quickly, others more slowly. You can check with the organiser or the STOP PRESS on the web site if events are full or are undersubscribed, or if it has been necessary to make changes. **Please also ensure the Secretary has your email address so you can be advised of events in emergency.**

Do let the organiser know if you are interested in an event but can't attend so the feasibility of repeating it on another date can be assessed.

### Friday 8<sup>th</sup> - Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> September: Local Heritage Open Days.

Heritage Open Days is coordinated nationally by the [National Trust](#). Locally, it is thousands of organisations and individuals from all walks of life who make the festival happen.

This year the nationwide Heritage Open Days Festival runs from 8<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> September. Doors will open in buildings that are not normally accessible, other locations will waive their regular charges. Hidden histories, secret stories, unusual walks and talks await to be revealed.

The theme for the festival this year is Creativity Unwrapped and will showcase and celebrate local creative individuals whose talent, imagination and expression have added colour and enjoyment to our lives. Events are listed on the Heritage Open Days website and a quick search will reveal what is taking place in the area. <https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting>

Stoke on Trent has a proud record for the number and variety of events on offer. A selection appears below, but more will be added, so keep checking the website:

Open specially: St. Marks Church Shelton, Bethesda Chapel, Stoke Minster, Phoenix Works bottle oven and \*Trentham Parish Church (\*more below).

Museums: Chatterley Whitfield Heritage Centre, Etruria Industrial Museum, Ford Green Hall, Gladstone Pottery Museum, Moorcroft Heritage Visitor Centre, Spode Museum and V&A Wedgwood.

Walks and Talks: Exploring A R Wood's Burslem, Exploring Hugh Henshall's Longport and The History of Grinding in the Development of the Pottery Industry.

Details of each event appear on the website. They include displays, films, music, tours and hands on activities. There will be something on every day, so come along and be a tourist in your own city.

### **\*Trentham**

Trentham has been holding a Heritage Open Day since 2016, This year the event is entitled “Trentham - A Celebration of Colour and Creativity” and will take place on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> September, 11:00 - 16:00, at Trentham Parish Church, Park Drive, ST4 8AB.

St Mary and All Saints Church is a vibrant parish church with a continuous heritage dating back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The church was rebuilt in 1844 to a design by Sir Charles Barry. The Grade II\* listed building contains fine Minton tiles and memorials to the Sutherlands of Trentham Hall. Music sessions will take place during the day.

In the church vestry and church centre, the Trentham Heritage Project will showcase the creativity of locals past and present. For 200 years Trentham was a hotspot for people involved in the creative arts and design. Their work was bought by royalty and found its way into many corners of the world. Included will be: Thomas Kirkby, a master painter for Minton; Archdeacon Malcolm Graham, a local vicar who dabbled in art and photography; Reginald Haggard, a ceramic designer, who was also a prolific artist; plus many pottery owners, including names like Moorcroft, Shelley and Johnson, who inspired creativity in their workers. Last but not least, the Duchess of Sutherland will be remembered for championing the inspired metalwork of the Cripples Guild.

A creative hub will feature a virtual exhibition of the work of current local artists, a local musician will play music from across the decades and a master craftsman and engraver from Spode will display some of his designs and the tools of his trade. All presented by an enthusiastic team of volunteers.

*Marilyn Vigurs [coordinator for Trentham Heritage Project]*

### **Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> September: Coach trip: Dyrham Park<sup>NT</sup>, Gloucestershire.**

The deadline for booking the trip to Dyrham Park has been extended as there are still insufficient numbers to make it viable – see the last Newsletter for details.

If you enjoyed the Boughton House visit you will enjoy this Coach Trip. The property is one of the few relatively unaltered houses of the Baroque period with stunning contents assembled by courtiers in the service of William and Mary. The park with beautiful gardens is set in glorious Gloucestershire.

Full catering and retail opportunities as standard at a National Trust property. In addition, we are being given a customised individual private tour of the Conservation Studio.

Depart from Brunswick St. at 8am, return at 4.15pm and hope to be back in Newcastle by 7pm, traffic permitting. Apologies for the early start to avoid congestion and allow for comfort breaks on both journeys.

Cost £20 (£22 for non-NSNTA members) includes coach fare, driver's gratuity and donation to NSNTA. The coach has full on board facilities.

Family and friends welcome: non-NT members will be asked to pay £17.00 by card to the Trust at Dyrham on the day.

Please apply to Ralph White, Thyme Cottage, 20 Upper Green, Wolverhampton WV6 8QH, as soon as possible, but by Thursday 31<sup>th</sup> August at the absolute latest using the booking form and enclosing cheque and SAE.

### **Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> September: Talk: Ross Underwood - "Kyrgyzstan".**

Having worked as Head Gardener at Hodnet Hall Gardens for a number of years, Ross has in July this year been appointed Head Gardener at Goldstone Hall with a team of three to look after five intensely cultivated acres including one of the UK's most productive hotel kitchen gardens growing vegetables and fruit for the restaurant. His talk has evolved after a tour of Kyrgyzstan. As well as the plants he saw in a country we have barely heard of, you will find the record covering other aspects of his life there of his visit fascinating.

### **Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October: Car Trip: Staffordshire Museum Collection Stores, Beaconside Business Park, Stafford.**

Such was the enormous response to this trip last April that it was decided to book a return visit for those who were unable to get on it last time. If you applied for the previous trip and were unsuccessful, you must apply again but you will be given preference before brand new applications. The numbers are limited to 20 so early application is advisable.

The treasure trove of historical artefacts, costumes, photographs etc. will be available for us to see in a tour of their current home. A wealth of fascinating objects is housed in two large warehouses approximately two miles outside Stafford town centre; full directions will be given on booking and 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 photography collections before moving on to the

mezzanine floor where all manner of domestic appliances is kept. There is no lift to this 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 two hours so we shall meet at the entrance of the collections store in order to begin the tour at 10:30am. Members can then visit a local hostelry for lunch if they wish.

Cost: £5:50 (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 616113 or [rosewheat@virginmedia.com](mailto:rosewheat@virginmedia.com).

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

**Friday 13<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> October: Coach Trip: 2 nights/3 days Mini Holiday in Salisbury, staying at the historic 4\* Red Lion hotel.**

This was advertised in the last newsletter but there are still limited hotel spaces available so if you have not already applied please do so as soon as possible.

Itinerary includes **Sudeley Castle** (Historic Houses), '**Arundells**' (Edward Heath's house), **Mompesson House**<sup>NT</sup>, an impressive 18th-century townhouse with a tranquil walled garden, **The Cathedral** and **Coughton Court**<sup>NT</sup>. See the last Newsletter for more details.

Please apply to Marion Lycett with the booking form including a deposit cheque for £100 per person made out to North Staffs NT Association and a stamped addressed envelope. Enquiries to either Marion or Cynthia by telephone or email – see inside the back cover of the Newsletter or the website for contact addresses and telephone numbers.

Cost per person: £280 each for 2 people sharing. Single room supplement £125. All rooms are double or twin. There's a discount for members of Historic Houses.

**Tuesday 17th October 7:15pm: EGM and Talk: Shaun Farrelly - "The Atlantic Telegraph"**

The Extraordinary General Meeting is called to vote on a change to the NSNTA constitution to no longer require members to be a member of the National Trust – see under "Membership" below for more details.

Shaun Farrelly spent nearly thirty-eight years working for GPO/British Telecom/BT with a number of those years as a lecturer at the BT Technical



College in Yarnfield. He now gives lectures on a variety of subjects and this talk will show us how the world changed when the electric telegraph arrived in the nineteenth century. He talks about the laying of the first under-water trans-Atlantic cable, (which used copper from the Thomas Bolton works at Frogall) with the colossal engineering challenges and huge amounts of money at stake.

The talk is supported with some samples of submarine cables and is most definitely not technical.

### Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> October: Car Trip: BCB Festival tour, All Saints Church .

At the AGM Clare Wood introduced us to the British Ceramic Biennial Festival. Further to this she offered to give a guided tour at the main festival venue, All Saints Church, Leek Road, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 3HH, starting at 2:00pm and lasting approximately 1 hour, after which we would be free to independently look around until the venue closes at 4:00pm.

There is no charge for the tour, but places must be booked in advance as numbers are limited to the first 30 to apply - an additional date and tour would be requested if this this number is substantially exceeded.

Please book with Ralph White at least a week in advance by email on [ralph@ralphwhitedesign.com](mailto:ralph@ralphwhitedesign.com), or phone on 01902 752833, otherwise by post to Thyme Cottage, 20 Upper Green, Wolverhampton WV6 8QH with SAE or return phone number for confirmation. **Please let him know if you are unable to go having booked.**

Ralph suggests meeting at the Church Exhibition venue at 1:45. If Googling, search on All Saints Church ST1 3HU. Ignore Joiners Square links, they are misleading – it's beyond there from Stoke-on-Trent.

### Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November: Lunch with optional Walk: The Wharf, Cheswardine.

The Wharf Tavern at Cheswardine near Market Drayton is a spacious pub on the banks of the Shropshire Union canal. It serves traditional home cooked meals, made with fresh ingredients sourced locally. We have tables reserved for us for lunch at 1pm, when we can look forward a good meal, in good company, with a goodly selection of wines and beers also available.

You are most welcome to join me for a countryside walk before lunch. We will meet at the pub at 11am,



for a four-mile walk. This takes us through farmland, two drumbles, then Cheswardine village, and on to the canal to return to the Wharf. The public footpath goes through fields currently growing sweetcorn, and I must compliment the farmer who has left a clear wide pathway through for us – if only they were all like this! Cheswardine village, dominated by St. Swithun’s church was a best kept village winner in 1988 and ’89, and still has the look and feel of an active cared-for community.



Please note that there are about ten stiles to cross, some of which are quite high.

Dogs are not allowed in the pub. They are welcome on the walk but will need to be helped over some of the stiles.

Meet at the Wharf Tavern TF9 2LP at 11am for the walk or at 1pm for the lunch.

Suggested donation for the National Trust for either or both is £3.00 – pay on the day. Pay the pub directly for your food and drinks.

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

## Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> November: Talk: Jill Rezzano - "New Vic Theatre".

Jill Rezzano is Head of Education at the New Vic Theatre, managing the Education department, working with students and teachers from schools, colleges and universities. She works with the rest of the Education team to develop and deliver workshops, learning resources and other support and is responsible for our schools partnership with the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) and others.

## Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> December: Christmas Lunch at The Swan With Two Necks.

This year we thought we would have a change and try a new venue, but, also as last year, no details of the lunch - menu and price - will be available until later so we need to be patient. In the meantime please don't complete the booking form but register your interest by emailing Cynthia Dumbelton on [dumbeltoncynthia@gmail.com](mailto:dumbeltoncynthia@gmail.com), and she will let you know more when details are available. If you don't use the internet, please ring on 01782 641765 to be put on the list.

## *To Book*

Please use the booking forms located in the centre of the magazine where provided. Other events (walks etc.) may be booked by email or as indicated.

It is preferable that organisers hold emergency contact details for members on trips should a situation arise. You are therefore invited, particularly if travelling without a companion, to provide the name and number of someone who can be contacted in emergency, along with any critical medical conditions that might be relevant, or whether (and where) you carry ICE (In Case of Emergency) details. We also request that you provide your own mobile number so that you can be contacted should you fail to appear at a rendezvous.

### *Help! Help! Help!*

**We are still in desperate need of a Talks Organiser. Good speakers get booked up well over a year ahead and we have none arranged for September 2024 onwards, so if this post remains vacant for much longer our Talks programme runs the risk of coming to an end. See the last Newsletter for more information. If you could manage the task but are wary of public speaking or cannot commit to attending every talk there are others willing to take on that aspect – the introducing and thanking of speakers.**

**Most committee members have been in post for many years and it is proving too much to maintain activities to the standards we have been accustomed to without more help.**

**NSNTA Membership.** In our current constitution, all members of the North Staffs National Trust Association must also be and remain members of the National Trust (or volunteers, NT staff, or the spouse of a life member). The committee are aware of several cases where members have resigned from the NT and so have also had to resign from the NSNTA, despite wishing to remain members of our local group. There may also be people out there who would like to join us but are unwilling or unable to pay for national membership.

It is proposed to remove the requirement for our members to also be national NT members, making membership open to any interested person.

Any change to our constitution requires a two-thirds majority vote at a General Meeting of the Association.

An Extraordinary General Meeting has been called for Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> October at 7.15pm (immediately before our talk by Shaun Farrelly on "The Atlantic Telegraph") to discuss and vote on this one issue.

**New Members:** We have pleasure in announcing and welcoming the following who have joined since we last welcomed new members: Janice Hawkins, Colin Lowe, Sam Hayward, Sheelagh and John Goulden, Karin and Sid Goodman. Current membership is 252.

**NT Membership Discount** A reminder that a discount on the general National Trust membership subscription is available to eligible members – see Newsletter 110 or their website for more details.

## *Photographic Archives*

A reminder that Kay Williams, would be grateful for some photos/leaflets from visits when she is not there herself; prints or digital images are equally acceptable. See inside the back cover for Kay's contact details.

The editor acknowledges and thanks contributors of photographs included in this issue, and also for any photos sent but not used. Any photographs submitted will also be passed on to Kay for possible use in the archives, and may be used on the NSNTA website for record or publicity purposes. Copyright (which must be owned or obtained in writing by the submitter) is acknowledged for all images even if not stated in the magazine. Please contact the editor if more details of any item are required.

## *Reviews of Recent Events*

*Note: due to restricted space only a limited number of photographs, to a very reduced scale, are included here. See the website for a more extensive range, including these, all to a much larger scale.*

### **Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> April: Talk: Dr. Peter Thomas - 'What have trees ever done for us?'**

This was a fascinating talk presented by an outstanding lecturer who is widely recognised as one of the foremost experts on his subject. I learnt more about trees in one hour than I had ever previously known and, moreover, Peter's style is so relaxed and full of humour that you hardly recognise that you are being educated. We learnt the origins of Poet Laureate and bachelor and other words; basic foodstuffs which come from trees: fruit, nuts tea, coffee and spices: good drugs, such as aspirin and quinine, and toxic chemicals like strychnine and eucalyptus. Then we moved on to further benefits which trees bring us, some which I had never thought of, bomb blast protection anyone? and others which are now accepted by scientists throughout the world from noise reduction to the fight against pollution. Green space and woodland encourage us to walk and keep cool, leading to social cohesion and mental well-being, they also reduce stress and may even influence recovery from surgery.

Naturally, Peter was keen to reduce deforestation and supported the planting of more trees but his message regarding climate change was somewhat mixed as trees grow slowly and initially can cause carbon loss from the soil, even the Amazon basin is at best carbon neutral. The number and variety of questions from members after the talk demonstrated very clearly the enjoyment and interest of all those who braved a wet and windy evening.

*Rose Wheat*

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

It was an overcast morning on 23<sup>rd</sup> April when 24 walkers were met by Richard for a walk through Parrot's Drumble. Off we went into our walk, first stop over a stile across a field just behind the Talke Industrial estate. We were met by two more stiles. Some of us found we were not as agile as we once were; thanks to Nicky's help we all got over them.

We entered the woodland walk to our right: very undulating and a little muddy in places. There were not so many Bluebells out but lots of Wild Garlic, Wood Anemone, and the odd cluster of Sorrel Fairy Bells.





We arrived back at the Freeport Mall just before the rain started to fall where we had a much appreciated coffee and lunch.

Thanks to Richard for leading our walk.

*Gwen Wilson*

### Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> April: Car Trip: Staffordshire Museum Collection Stores.

The hangars at Beaconside Business Park near the Stafford crematorium contain masses of historic material, we had lots of fascinating information from the three curators.

On entering the first store, we saw the carriage used by the Earl of Shrewsbury for the coronation of King Edward VII in 1902 and again the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953. Dray horses, bred for pulling heavy loads, were borrowed from a brewery for the occasion, but 200 metres before arriving at Westminster Abbey in the rain, they stopped! They did not like the crowds and the noise, so the Earl's journey was completed by car.



This store also contained household items including furniture and kitchen equipment. We saw pictures by Staffordshire artists, or of Staffordshire, hanging on rolling racks. There were clothes, mainly from Staffordshire residents, ranging from uniforms to underwear and shoes. The photographic items included Daguerreotypes from the 1840s and other early types of photographs, many in beautiful frames and all carefully wrapped in acid-free tissue paper in boxes out of the light. Embroideries too were kept in these careful conditions, never touched by hand.





A beautiful dolls' house with furniture was made by members of Barton and Dunstall Women's Institute in 1925. It had seven rooms including three bedrooms, fireplaces, pictures, a staircase, mirrors and a kitchen stove.

We had a short visit to a second building containing larger items, agricultural and garden equipment and shop displays.



The fireproof stores are designed for a preventive approach to preserving the items, each building has its temperature and humidity carefully regulated and there are small gadgets at floor level to locate any pests.

Many thanks to Rose and Marion for organising this car trip. It was well subscribed so there will be a second tour on 5<sup>th</sup> October.

*Anthea Bond*

### Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> May: Coach Trip: Shrewsbury guided tour and river trip.

After days of unsettled weather prior to this outing many ladies, and gents, had difficulty deciding what to wear so waterproofs, umbrellas and gloves were packed even though it was May. Thankfully none were needed, we were so lucky!



Morning coffee was served in Shrewsbury Museum and we then joined our guide for the walking tour. Our guide was wonderful, full of facts and humour.



We wondered how many times we had been to Shrewsbury and never noticed the museum and all the historic buildings around the square, the oldest dating from 1730.

From there we moved onto churches and timber framed buildings all with a tale to tell. The original St. Chads fell down and was replaced with the new round structure near the park. St. Alkmunds was partially rebuilt to prevent another collapse and finally St. Mary's had the most beautiful ancient stained glass windows.



After that we were able to wander around, have a leisurely lunch in the sunshine and meet up with everyone at the Victoria Quay, Riverside, for the river cruise along the Severn which loops around Shrewsbury. The river has a wide variety of fish, animals and birds in and around it. Beautiful trees through the riverbank and many Weeping Willows hang majestically over the water. A restful outward journey with tea, coffee and biscuits was followed by an informative return. Our pilot guide pointed out buildings, churches, boat houses and parks. He finished off the trip with a poem. "There are tall ships, small ships and sailing ships but the best ships are friendships."



The coach was waiting for us on return and it was homeward bound.

Our thanks to Sue and John for organising such an enjoyable day.

*Judith Hagan and Lesley Huson.*

**Tuesday 16th May 7:00pm: AGM and Presentation by Clare Wood, Artistic Director and Chief Executive of British Ceramics Biennial.**

**North Staffordshire National Trust Association  
Draft Minutes of the 43<sup>rd</sup> AGM at the North Staffs Conference Centre.**

*(Subject to ratification at next AGM)*

Ralph White welcomed members to the AGM. There were 5 apologies.

**Chairman's opening remarks:** Ralph stated that on the surface the Association was functioning well with a full programme of walks, talks and trips. However declining membership was a concern. Our constitution gave as one of our aims raising money for the National Trust and if lack of support meant that activities failed to function and members were not willing to sit on the committee or organise events we would be unable to do this. We had not made donations for 3 years due to the pandemic. Previously we donated £10,000 a year but only £5,000 was available for this year. The committee need to know what members want. There is no longer the same demand for trips; Ralph's trip to Dyrham Park in September had only 4 applications. Walks are better supported. No one had volunteered to be Vice Chair or Talks Organiser. If this situation continues, in 2 years we will be in difficulties. Ralph asked members to spread the word amongst friends. He thanked Rose Wheat for her years of sterling service as,  
*[Continued after booking forms*



## Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> September: Coach Trip: Dyrham Park, Gloucestershire.

Cost £20 (£22 for non-NSNTA members) includes coach fare, driver's gratuity and donation to NSNTA. The coach has full on board facilities.

Family and friends welcome: non-NT members will be asked to pay £17.00 by card to the Trust at Dyrham on the day.

Please apply to Ralph White, Thyme Cottage, 20 Upper Green, Wolverhampton WV6 8QH, as soon as possible, but by Thursday 31<sup>th</sup> August at the absolute latest enclosing cheque and SAE.

## Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October: Car Trip: Staffordshire Museum Collection Stores.

Cost: £5:50 (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 616113 or [rosewheat@virginmedia.com](mailto:rosewheat@virginmedia.com).

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

Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> September: Coach Trip: Dyrham Park, Gloucestershire.

Name(s) ..... Association number ..... Cost: £ .....

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email ..... Total .....

Address .....

.....

Telephone No. .... Mobile .....

Emergency contact and details etc. ....

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Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> October: Car Trip: Staffordshire Museum Collection Stores.

Name(s) ..... Association number ..... Cost: £ .....

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email ..... Total .....

Address .....

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Telephone No. .... Mobile .....

Emergency contact and details etc. ....

.....

I am willing to car share, to offer a lift  to receive a lift



## Friday 13<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> October: Coach Trip: 2 nights/3 days Mini Holiday.

Cost per person: £280 2 people sharing. Single room supplement £125. All rooms are double or twin. There's a discount for members of English Heritage and Historic Houses.

Please apply to Marion Lycett, Millstone House, The Green, Bagnall, Stoke-on-Trent ST9 9JR with the booking form overleaf including a deposit cheque for £100 per person made out to North Staffs NT Association and a stamped addressed envelope.

Enquiries to either Marion or Cynthia by telephone or email – see inside the back cover of the Newsletter for contact addresses and telephone numbers.

To secure a place, please apply as soon as possible. There is a limit to the time the hotel will hold rooms for us.

## Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> December: Christmas Lunch at The Swan With Two Necks.

**Do not complete this booking form until you have received full details from Cynthia.**

Please register your interest by emailing [dumbeltoncynthia@gmail.com](mailto:dumbeltoncynthia@gmail.com), and she will let you know more when details are available. If you don't use the internet, please ring on 01782 641765 to be put on the list.

Choice of menu:

Starter .....

Main course .....

Dessert .....

Dietary requirements .....

I/We would like to sit near .....

When you have received details and completed your menu choices return with cheque and SAE to Cynthia Dumbelton at 32 The Lea, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 8DY.

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> October: Coach Trip: 2 nights/3 days Mini Holiday.

Name(s) ..... Association number ..... Cost: £ .....

.....

.....

email ..... Total .....

Address .....

.....

Telephone No. .... Mobile .....

Please reserve a: Double Room  Twin Room  Single occupancy

I/We are member(s) of: Historic Houses

Emergency contact and details etc. ....

.....



Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> December: Christmas Lunch at The Swan With Two Necks.

Name(s) ..... Association number ..... Cost: £ .....

.....

.....

email ..... Total .....

Address .....

.....

Telephone No. .... Mobile .....

Emergency contact and details etc. ....

.....



## Membership Applications

It is anticipated that at the EGM on 17<sup>th</sup> October a change to the constitution will be accepted allowing non-National Trust members to join our Association. Therefore you may be able to pass on the application form below to your friends or relatives to join.

### North Staffordshire National Trust Association: Membership Application

We are always delighted to welcome new members. Note that, subject to acceptance at the EGM on 17<sup>th</sup> October, you no longer need to be a member of the National Trust or a National Trust Volunteer.

Annual subscription, for the first member £12.00. For each additional member at the same address £8.00.

Please complete the form overleaf or download one from our website [www.northstaffsnt.org.uk](http://www.northstaffsnt.org.uk) and send, with your cheque, payable to "North Staffs NT Association", to the Membership Secretary: Richard Adams, 79 Whitmore Road, Newcastle ST5 3LZ, email: [rjadams@doctors.org.uk](mailto:rjadams@doctors.org.uk), Tel: 01782 637183.

Thank you very much.

Contact details entered here will be used solely for administrative purposes in connection with your membership of NSNTA and will not be shared with other members or National Trust UK.

## Questionnaire

We strongly urge you to complete the questionnaire opposite so that we can gauge what can be done to encourage more members to participate in activities, to encourage more members to help in the management of those activities, and to attract new members.

On the comments section you might like to consider the following issues: Coach trips – are they too early, too long, too costly, is the meeting point convenient? Would you prefer some talks in the morning or afternoon, or perhaps lunchtime, especially in winter? Would you like to see events on other days of the week, including weekends? What type of social events would you like to see, at what time of day? Is there too much emphasis on fund raising? Is the Newsletter too concentrated on our own activities without considering wider issues relating to the National Trust?

The form should be cut out and posted to our secretary, Richard Adams, 79 Whitmore Road Newcastle ST5 3LZ, or passed to any committee member, or, if you don't mind revealing your identity or have an anonymous email address, scanned and emailed to him at [rjadams@doctors.org.uk](mailto:rjadams@doctors.org.uk), or it may be possible to complete it on line.



### North Staffordshire National Trust Association: Membership Application

I/We wish to apply for membership of the North Staffordshire National Trust Association.  
I/We are NT members or volunteers.

| Name(s) | NT member number | Cost:      |
|---------|------------------|------------|
| 1 ..... | .....            | <b>£12</b> |
| 2 ..... | .....            | .....      |
| 3 ..... | .....            | .....      |
| 4 ..... | .....            | .....      |
| Address | Total            | .....      |

.....  
.....

Telephone No. .... email .....



## MEMBERS' CONFIDENTIAL QUESTIONNAIRE

### HELP US PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

As you may already know your committee is concerned about the reducing membership numbers and the lower take-up for outings and events and so we would like to receive guidance from all current members as to how the Association might be made more attractive to existing and prospective new members, to ease or resolve these problems. We would very much value your views on how we might do this – we are good at raising funds for the National Trust but are we good enough in meeting members' needs?

Would *all* members please complete the following short questionnaire (in complete anonymity) and post it to us\*, put it in the same envelope as your booking for events or hand it to a committee member at the September talk or wherever else you may meet them. Every reply will be important. Feel free to expand or comment on any answer in Comments overleaf.

**Q1:** Which events do you attend?                      *Never*   *Occasionally*   *Most Times*

|                                                  |                          |                          |                          |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Talks/lectures                                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Coach Outings                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Car Outings                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Walks                                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Holidays                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) Social Events (e.g. Christmas Dinner, Social) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Q2:** Are you attending/participating more or less frequently than before COVID?                      *More*   *Less*

|  |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|

If less, why is this? Has COVID affected you socially?

**Q3:** How do you rate:                      *Very Good*   *Good*   *Satisfactory*   *Poor*

|                                        |                          |                          |                          |                          |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Our talks at the Medical Institute? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Our coach outings?                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) Our car outings?                    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) Our walks?                          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Our holidays?                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) Our programme overall?              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

*[Continued overleaf]*



**Q4:** What improvements/additions to our overall programme can you suggest?  
Are there any additional events/activities you would like to see included?

**Q5:** Would you recommend our Association to any prospective new members?

Yes    *Don't know*    No  
                       

If No, please say why.

**Q6:** Do you have any further comments?

*\*Please complete this form and return it to Richard Adams, 79 Whitmore Road, Newcastle-under-Lyme, ST3 3LZ, or get it back to any committee member at any event who will pass it on. Thank you in advance.*

**EVERY REPLY COUNTS – THE FUTURE OF THE ASSOCIATION DEPENDS ON KNOWING AND ACTING ON WHAT THE MEMBERSHIP WANTS.**



amongst other things, Vice Chair and Talks Organiser. In response to a member who asked if the committee would consider opening membership to those who were not members of the NT Ralph responded that this was under consideration.

**The minutes of the 42<sup>nd</sup> AGM:** were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

**Secretary's Report:** Richard Adams apologised for his absence; his report was read by Ralph.

Our membership had dropped from 295 last year to 252 now. Covid will have caused some to lose confidence in going out but the trend is now unmistakable and worrying. On a happier note in the 12 months up to the end of March we enjoyed 24 different events. Early on in the year we hosted Hilary McGrady, Director General of the NT , the first such visit in the 43 years of our Association.

There were 7 varied and fascinating talks in this hall plus the AGM. We went on 4 walks, 5 car outings and 3 coach trips. We held two social events and our 5 day holiday to Scotland was a highlight of the year for many of us. Two more coach outings were planned but had to be cancelled; one through insufficient interest and one because of the 40 degree heatwave on the day, another first in the history of our Association! Thanks to everyone involved in creating and running our programme of events, to Marion and her team in continuing to produce a wide range of days out and holidays and special thanks to Rose who has organised so many splendid talks for us all to enjoy.

**Treasurer's Report:** In Huw's absence Jane Mayer presented the accounts for 2022/23, copies of which have been distributed. Huw commented that this had been a more typical year in that we had had a full range of activities. Subscriptions and donations from members were similar to last year. Surplus on trips included a donation of £800 from Regent Travel re the Scottish holiday. Talks expenses were higher as we paid for 9 lectures as opposed to 5 in the previous year. No donations were requested from the National Trust so none were made. The resulting surplus of £1989 was roughly double that of the previous year. The total reserves rose by almost £2000 to £14373. Huw thanked James Scott of Hardings for examining the accounts again this year.

Richard Mayer proposed and Bob Winter seconded that the accounts be accepted. All agreed.

**Subscription level for next year:** The meeting agreed to keep subscriptions for 2024 at the same level as before, that is £12 for individual members and £8 for further members at the same address.

**North Staffs National Trust Association**  
**Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023**

|                                                       | 2022/2023  |              | 2021/2022  |                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------------|
|                                                       | £          | £            | £          | £                  |
| <b><u>Income</u></b>                                  |            |              |            |                    |
| Members' Subscriptions                                | 2724       |              | 2536       |                    |
| Donations                                             | 53         |              | 93         |                    |
| Surplus on Trips and Events                           | 2210       |              | 551        |                    |
| Bank Interest                                         | <u>15</u>  |              | <u>0</u>   |                    |
|                                                       |            | 5002         |            | 3180               |
| <b><u>Expenditure</u></b>                             |            |              |            |                    |
| Talks (incl Venue Hire )                              | 1876       |              | 1051       |                    |
| Newsletter Costs                                      | 590        |              | 501        |                    |
| Postage and Officers' Expenses                        | <u>547</u> |              | <u>624</u> |                    |
|                                                       |            | 3013         |            | 2176               |
| <b>Net Surplus for the year</b>                       |            | <u>1989</u>  |            | <u>1004</u>        |
| <b>Balance Sheet as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023</b> |            |              |            |                    |
| <b><u>Assets</u></b>                                  |            |              |            |                    |
| Bank Balance                                          |            | 14273        |            | 12226              |
| Payments in Advance                                   |            | <u>100</u>   |            | <u>300</u>         |
|                                                       |            | 14373        |            | 12526              |
| <b><u>Liabilities</u></b>                             |            |              |            |                    |
| Other Creditors                                       |            | 0            |            | 142                |
| <b>Total Net Assets</b>                               |            | <u>14373</u> |            | <u>12384</u>       |
| Represented by :                                      |            |              |            |                    |
| <b><u>Reserves</u></b>                                |            |              |            |                    |
| Reserves brought forward                              |            | 12384        |            | 11380              |
| Surplus for the year                                  |            | 1989         |            | 1004               |
| <b>Total Reserves</b>                                 |            | <u>14373</u> |            | <u>12384</u>       |
| R White—Chairman                                      |            |              |            | H Davies—Treasurer |

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

J. Scott FCCA (Hon Examiner)  
 Hardings Chartered Accountants, 6, Marsh Parade , Newcastle under Lyme

**Approval for re-election:** The meeting was asked for approval to waive the requirement in the constitution for committee members to stand down after 5 years. All in favour.

**Election of officers and committee:** Philip Alcock, proposed by Marion Lycett, seconded by Richard Adams, was nominated for the committee. All agreed. There were no further new nominations.

The following were put forward for re-election:-

|                        |                                                                                                   |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chair                  | Ralph White                                                                                       |
| Vice Chair             | (vacant)                                                                                          |
| Treasurer              | Huw Davies                                                                                        |
| Secretary & Membership | Richard Adams                                                                                     |
| Committee              | Roger Cartlidge, Cynthia Dumbelton, Marion Lycett, Jane Mayer, John Spriggs, Sue Till, Bob Winter |

All agreed.

**AOB:** Richard Mayer thanked the committee for all their work on behalf of the Association.

The meeting closed at 7.28pm.

### **Presentation by Clare Wood**

Clare Wood is Chief Executive and Artistic Director of the British Ceramic Biennial.

We were grateful to her for finding time in her preparations to tell us more about The Biennial which takes place again later this year. The range of people and organisations involved is enormous. It includes international artists and local charities. We really enjoyed seeing images of the varied work and amazing techniques involved in producing such individual results.

It says much for Clare's dynamism and professionalism that she kept the audience enthralled, even though the projector wanted a rest every two minutes.

Clare has invited a limited number of members to a personal tour of the exhibition on 23<sup>rd</sup> October.

*James Hartley*

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

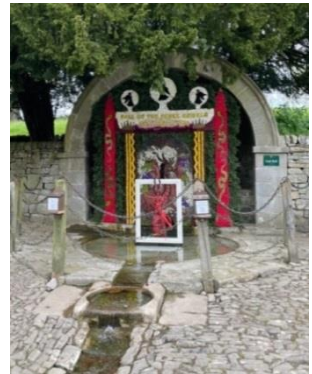
As a girl coming to Tissington with my parents, I would walk past the hall and wonder what it was like inside, it looked so solid, quiet and beautiful. My dream came true today and it didn't disappoint.

The trip, organised by Rose Wheat, was very popular so we were divided into two groups. We started in the gardens with our guide, Polly. The old hall (which was knocked down after 200 years) was rebuilt in 1609 on a lovely piece of land opposite, using the stone from the local area. The gardens were well maintained with a large marquee tucked away in the corner used for a wedding venue.



The house remains the family home of the FitzHerberts, and it had a lovely feel about it. Large oil paintings of family members stared back at us as we moved from room to room. The inside guide, Wendy, told us there were no thistles on the chairs, so we could sit anywhere if we needed to. No climate control, or closed blinds. It was filled with light and sunshine, what a delight.

After the house visit we walked through the village in the sunshine and it was buzzing with people who, like us, had come to see the Well Dressing display. Made of flower petals and flower parts they were very intricate and must have taken ages to do. It was all very impressive, and I thought it such a lovely custom to draw all the villagers together.



*Julia Davies*

## Friday 9<sup>th</sup> June: Social Event at the Brampton Museum.

It was a sunny afternoon as 69 members congregated at the Brampton Museum to enjoy a cup or two of tea or coffee along with a generous slice of sponge cake or a scone with jam and cream. This was a new venture to give members an

opportunity to meet others and the committee, to seek feedback on what they would like to see in the programme and invite them to participate in bringing new ideas to our activities.

Overall it was deemed a success and it is planned to hold further social events in the future, although they may be of various different formats. Ideas are welcome on what you would like to see – morning, lunchtime, afternoon, evening, cheese & wine, music event, theatre, beetle drive? Let the committee know!

However it was less successful in gaining ideas on how the Association might move forward to attract more members to the association, and more members to participate in activities. The committee is desperate to address both these issues and hence have launched the questionnaire on centre pages vii-viii, on which we strongly urge you to have your two-penny worth.

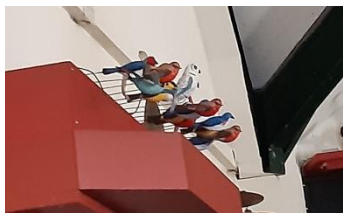
### Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> June: Car Trip: Pipes in the Peak Organ Museum and Concert.

On a sunny Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> June we drove through picturesque countryside to visit Dovedale garage, Thorpe near Ashbourne to 'Pipes in the Peak.' Lunch table had been pre booked at the local hostelry The Old Dog with a party atmosphere everyone enjoying themselves.

The concert was in a large barn, our seats were reserved with a wonderful view of the Compton organ which had been saved from The Regal/ABC cinema in Derby.

The Motor memorabilia around the barn was extensive and expensive as the owner also collected Classic Cars.

At 2.30 pm the music began. 'I do like to be beside the seaside' and up rose Phil Kelsall MBE, Resident Organist at The Tower Ballroom Blackpool.



The range of music played was extensive and inspirational. Toes were tapping, voices rang out and hands were waving to the rhythm of the sounds that Phil teased out. Other instruments would begin to play on their own – quite magical.

It was a day to remember and it did not end there as the Derbyshire/ Staffordshire countryside on the way home was a joy to see.

*Margaret Hewitt*

## Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> June: Coach Trip: Boughton House, Kettering, Northants.



It was, without doubt, worth waiting three years for our visit to Boughton House. Tucked away in the Northamptonshire countryside, Boughton House is one of the homes of the Dukes of Buccleuch and just breathes with the history of 500 years. It is crammed, indeed, overflowing, with the most incredible art;

furniture and tapestries amassed during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. We stood, almost unbelieving, in front of paintings by Van Dyke; Reubens; Murillo; El Greco; Canaletto and a collection of very special flower paintings by the artist Monnoyer.

The furniture, mostly made by the French Huguenots who were fleeing from persecution, ranged from very inviting chairs to intricately constructed and opulently decorated cabinets. There was also a billiard table and a huge gaming table; game unknown!



But for me, it was the tapestries, oh! the tapestries, that left me breathless with admiration. They were huge, hanging from every wall, colours glowing in the dim light and one stood wondering in awe how they were constructed. Some were

Flemish but the majority were made in Mortlake or Soho in London, all telling different stories.



In contrast to all this luxury and genteel living we suddenly found ourselves in the Armoury; a world class collection of all the terrible implements used in battles. A brutal sight which sent shivers down my spine.

I can't finish without mentioning the lunch! This was the best lunch ever offered on any of our trips; a beautifully prepared buffet of cold meats and salads which was really enjoyed by all.

So in conclusion, a very special thanks to Rose who stubbornly refused to give up on this event and must have arranged it 3 times over. Thank you Rose, for giving us a day to remember; lovely to see old friends and another step towards normality after Covid.

*Katie Forrest-Hay*

## Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> June: Coach Holiday: 4 nights/5 days Northumberland.

After a crack of dawn start we headed to the M1 at Derby and a coffee stop at Denby Village, after which we proceeded to Durham. The coach stop was located by the river, so we then climbed the hill through, first a modern shop and entertainment complex and then through a warren of medieval streets which gave way to a magnificent view across a large green to the lovely 12<sup>th</sup> century cathedral. Inside, the Cathedral was even more impressive, famous as the resting place of Saint Cuthbert, Saint Oswald and the Venerable Bede. The nearby Dean and Chapter Library contains three copies of the Magna Carta.



We were fortunate, whilst in the Cathedral, to hear a choir from Durham University rehearsing for a forthcoming concert. The sound of their voices reverberating through the 25-metre high nave added to the feeling of beauty and peace.



Our next stop was to view The Angel of the North – named Uriel, Antony Gormley’s tribute to the coal miners who toiled under the area for two hundred years. Only by seeing the Angel up close was it possible to appreciate its magnificence, the biggest statue of an angel in the world.

The journey to the White Swan Hotel, Alnwick, where we were based for the holiday, completed a very full day and we were ready for rest and refreshment.

*Phil Alcock*

The White Swan Hotel is a 300-year old coaching inn on the route from London to Edinburgh.

In the early 1900s, the White Star Line and Harland and Wolff agreed to construct 3 huge liners: the RMS Olympic, the RMS Titanic and the RMS Britannic. The RMS Olympic was launched in 1910, she was used in the First World War and later continued to carry passengers in luxury until 1935. Later that year the ship and its contents were sold in auctions before sailing to Jarrow where it was partially demolished.

The then owner of the White Swan Hotel, who had been a frequent passenger on the liner, bought the wood panelling and ceiling from the First-Class lounge and the staircase. They were inspired by the French Style of Louis XV, the walls had



elaborate wooden carving. A decorative marble fireplace had a vast mirror reflecting the room and the windows, which provided panoramic views of the sea. The dining room of the White Swan Hotel now has these items, as can be seen in the cover photograph\*, as well as the hotel staircase, more carvings and more decorated windows. (\*Available to download or glossy prints by request.)

In 1912, the RMS Titanic was lost on her maiden voyage. The RMS Britannic was launched during the First World war and used as a hospital ship until she was torpedoed in the Aegean Sea in 1916. Only the RMS Olympic served as the luxury liner it was intended to be. In 1937 the hull was towed to Fife for final demolition.

*Anthea Bond*

## Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> June: Day 2 – Alnwick Castle and Gardens.



Alnwick Castle is the second largest currently inhabited castle in England after Windsor Castle and is so referred to as “The Windsor of the North”. We began our excellent guided tours below the Norman arch carved with a zigzag pattern called dogtooth and adjacent a high-level well where a horseman riding-in could draw water for himself and his horse without having to dismount.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Duke refurbished the state rooms in the Italian Palace style in the 1850s and today they house an impressive collection of valuable items ranging from French clocks to crowns & coronets, Meissen and 18<sup>th</sup> century Chelsea Porcelain, and Victorian taxidermy to paintings & furniture.



The Lower Guard Chamber now houses a great array of armaments and in the Upper Guard Chamber is the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke's portrait, which he gifted to his daughter upon her wedding! It was painted by Van Dyck, who ignored the Duke's small-poxed face and gave him a good complexion.

There are several Canaletto paintings including one of Alnwick Castle, even though Canaletto never personally saw the castle. Another is of the Percy family's London house, before it was demolished when Trafalgar Square was remodelled.



The library houses 14,000 books and the ceiling was hand-carved by talented local craftsmen from the nearby shipyards. Also to be seen here are a clock, a barometer, a compass and a wind-speed-indicating instrument linked to the outside through the wall. Algernon Percy, the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke, diligently recorded the weather each day and sent daily readings to the coastguard and local fishermen.

Upon the doors to the drawing room there are carvings of a lion's head & Medusa's to "warn the men-folk not to enter". Within the room ladies could turn to "props" to help aid the flow of conversation, such as a beautiful, marquetry table called "The Five Senses table". Besides this are two Domenico Dionysus Gucci cabinets decorated with precious stones, now worth about \$4.5 million.

A further treasure is a surviving triptych wall painting from the Italian church of Santa Maria della Pace called "Piombo" (The Visitation) depicting The Virgin Mary and her cousin Elizabeth, both in pregnancy. It was painted in 1530 by Sebastian Luciani who died before finishing it and that is why there appears to be a floating head and a hand missing.

Alnwick Castle has been used as a filming location by actors such as Anthony Hopkins and for dramas such as Downton Abbey. The castle's bailey is where the Harry Potter quidditch tournaments were recorded and during our visit, if you felt inclined, you could take a broomstick training lesson!

Other activities at the castle include dressing-up in mediaeval costumes or trying your hand at soap making or archery. If you dared you could experience the Dragon Quest by making your way through a dimly lit maze of mirrors, forest and water-rapids, culminating in coming face to face with the fearsome Alnwick Dragon, and leaving you quaking in your boots. Who could fail to enjoy a visit to Alnwick Castle? All so superbly presented.

*Helen Mansell*

Alnwick Gardens

In the afternoon our group met outside the entrance to the "Poison garden": weather was hot and sunny. Our guide was Tom. On entry he first introduced us to Rhubarb – the leaves are toxic to humans, dogs and cats. The stems however are beneficial for us humans. Foxgloves: If any part of this plant is eaten can cause severe poisoning. Yew trees: extremely poisonous to humans, dogs, cats, cattle, horses: can cause death from cardiotoxic shock. Laburnum: all parts of plant can cause convulsions and even death. Cherry Laurel: leaves and seeds cause poisoning, can be fatal to dogs and cats, so use



Bay Laurel instead. Giant Hogweed: causes blistering and long lasting scars – very painful. This plant has been reported in Staffordshire recently.

After leaving the Poison garden we explored the gardens: we were not disappointed. We passed the walled area covered with clematis and honey suckle, the smell filled the air. The ornamental garden was full of roses, delphiniums and many border flowers.

The gardens had several water features including The Grand Cascade which in turn activates a water display simulating a volcanic eruption.



We then visited the allotments used by school children they are taught how to grow fruit, flowers and vegetables. Also twice a week elderly people with loneliness or dementia tend to their own patch. What a caring place this is!

*Gwen & Brian Wilson*

### Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> June: Day 3 – Cragside.

A short walk from the coach drop-off and one's attention is immediately grabbed by the height of the house emerging from the tumble of massive sandstone boulders blasted from the bedrock on which Cragside House sits. Higher still are the majestic conifers rising to more than 60m from the craggy valley side with their roots in cascades of pink and red rhododendrons.



We were at the house 20 minutes prior to opening, just as the shiny red shuttle bus pulled up. A steady ride round with a knowledgeable and enthusiastic driver gave a useful introduction to the history and geography of the estate.

Cragside, began in 1870, is the realisation of a bold plan that Sir William Armstrong probably formulated as a boy sitting beside his beloved Coquet river at the base of the crag. He frequently visited the area to get relief from the polluted Newcastle air in which his family lived and William suffered.

The house incorporates many of Armstrong's inventions and other innovations of the age. His passion was to produce power from hydrostatic pressure.

Tumbleton Lake adjacent the estate entrance produced power by passing water through a hydraulic engine that pumped spring water to a tank 80m above the house cut into the bedrock. When channelled to the house it arrived with enough pressure to operate kitchen spits, fire hydrants, cascades in the rockery, a dumb waiter (also used to lift coal for use on the upper floors thus improving the life for the servants) and most impressively a passenger lift. In 1878 Cragside became the first house in the world to have electric lighting.



Further springs were dammed to form more lakes. For the energetic, a steady climb over huge stone steps snaking through secretive shrubberies beside overhanging cliffs eventually opens out to the highest Nelly's Moss Lakes. These augmented the water pressure in the house.

Armstrong's 'jigger' pump invention that powered the passenger lift is well exhibited. He applied this principle to create the hydraulic crane widely used at factories and docksides. His wealth and fame attracted Heads of State from around the globe. His engineering works at Elswick on the Tyne went on to produce heavy engineering including the Tyne swing bridge, gun boats and other armaments. His name lived on after his death in the Armstrong Whitworth and Armstrong Siddely brands.

The spectacular rockery below the house and the transformation of bare moorland into breathtaking woodland is the result of Lady Armstrong's vision. She arranged for the planting of 7 million trees that have developed into the present awesome landscape. The Armstrongs have given practical examples of green energy and carbon storage so pertinent today.

Whether interested in pioneering engineering, forest grandeur or architect Shaw's arts and craft house, Cragside is a joy for all to behold.



*John Skinner*

## Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> June: Day 4 – Lindisfarne and Bamborough Castle.

The famous Holy Island of Lindisfarne is accessed via a causeway of just over three miles, the crossing times determined by the tides. We traversed in our coach but if crossing on foot then barefoot and keeping to the line of vertical

poles is advised, as footwear is likely to get stuck in the mud and, if you stray, you may end up in quick sand. Thoughtfully there are a few rescue points at intervals along the causeway, in the form of little sheds on stilts with ladders up to them where, if caught out by a tide, you can take sanctuary and wait to be rescued – then await the bill, which will likely be several hundreds of pounds.

Upon the island, some of our party explored the shoreline and observed the wildlife. Others potted around the village and may have visited the 7<sup>th</sup> century priory, now protected by English Heritage. I chose to walk briskly the mile to the headland at the opposite end of the island, following a shore path along which I overtook a young man making his barefoot pilgrimage.



Reaching Lindisfarne Castle at 10.20am, I was disappointed to find it not open and, annoyingly, there was no notice indicating what time it was due to open. A queue of potential visitors had formed and at 10.55am National Trust staff/volunteers emerged from the castle and opened up. I then ascended the steep crag and entered Lindisfarne Castle through the portcullised doorway.

Built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and much altered by Sir Edwin Lutyens in 1901 for the new owner, a publishing magnate, Edward Hudson, founder of Country Life magazine, the castle has a charm – cosy yet rugged and built into the rock, but on a wild, stormy night it must be quite an atmospheric place to be stranded. The castle had been a fort until the 19<sup>th</sup> century and has far reaching views of the island itself and over to the Farne Islands and Bamburgh Castle. On the battlements that catch the fierce winds I was nearly blown away. Internally the rooms appropriately feature Edwardian and Arts & Crafts style furnishings and gave me a William Morris vibe. The dining-table was laid out with lobster for supper - the lobsters being quirky, embroidered works of art.

Quite different to the large, airy Alnwick Castle & Bamburgh Castle, and more like Cragside or King Arthur's Camelot home, Lindisfarne Castle is on a smaller scale and with meandering tunnel-like corridors leading to its rooms.

About 100 yards behind the castle is a stone-walled garden, originally the garrison's vegetable plot. Lutyens asked his acquaintance, Gertrude Jekyll, to turn

it into a flower garden, and this has a delightful "country cottage" style today. An oasis of calm, yet a riot of colour and perfume. An attack on the senses.

Returning to the village, as there was not time to look at the Victorian lime kilns or the fishermen's upturned herring boats, I was tickled to see electric vehicle charging points on several of the now holiday cottages – most cottages were probably originally inhabited by people with no means for or need of a car. I treated myself to some yummy mead flavoured ice-cream reminiscent of the island's mediaeval monks, and then Lynn, our courier, treated us all to a taste of Lindisfarne Mead - a deliciously sweet fortified wine made with honey.

*Helen Mansell*

The village of Bamburgh was voted by "Which" magazine readers as the best seaside small town/village in the UK. The castle is all walls and turrets, Norman keep and battlements, high over everything. A building has been on the site for over 2000 years, it now belongs to the Armstrong family from Cragside, but tax implications meant they could not have both buildings. Cragside was taken over by the National Trust while the family continues to live in and maintain Bamburgh Castle for future generations.



The first Lord Armstrong spent a fortune renovating the castle and incorporating all the latest Victorian amenities. Our excellent guide showed us the main rooms, filled with paintings, furniture, tapestries, china, glassware, armour and arms.

There are fabulous views over the beach to the Farne Islands and towards Lindisfarne.

*Anthea Bond*

## Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> June: Day 5 – Return via Vindolanda and Hadrian's Wall.

We followed the scenic route along the military road, B6318, for our final visit to the Roman fort and town of Vindolanda. The eighteenth-century road was built partly from the stones of the old Roman wall and we passed a number of intrepid walkers striding along the official Hadrian's Wall pathway, a journey of 6 to 8 days if you completed the full 174 miles. Fortunately, we were comfortably seated on our coach and could view the stunning countryside of the Northumbria National Park including the Tree of the Year 2016 (I kid you not!) a lone sycamore which was featured in the Hollywood film, 'Robin Hood, Prince of Thieves'. Although only approximately 10% of the wall is still visible many earthworks remain to trace its course, intended as defensive positions to keep out the dastardly Scots or, at the very least to tax them on any goods they came to trade.



The site of the former fort and town of Vindolanda was far more extensive than I had expected and was quite stunning. At least four settlements have been excavated here, one built on top of the other and sign posts and 'sound posts' explained what we were seeing. This modern technology helped

us to interpret what we were looking at and also, brought the ancient garrison town to life with its vivid descriptions of the workshops, dwellings, barracks and administrative command post, the bath-house and tavern. What a noisy, smelly, smoky place it would have been! The full-scale replica section of part of Hadrian's wall and the amazing museum which houses a nationally significant collection of artefacts including the famous Vindolanda Writing Tablets were memorable and all in all, I think a return visit is a must.

*Rose Wheat*

### **Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> July: Walk: Greenway Bank Country Park at Knypersley.**

On July the 20<sup>th</sup>, 13 members and one well behaved dog completed a circumnavigation of the two lakes at the Greenway Country Park - the Serpentine and Knypersley Pool - a distance of approx. 4 miles. The first lake was created in 1781-3 by Hugh Henshall Williamson who was James Brindley's deputy and became the very wealthy owner of Greenway Bank Hall. Knypersley Pool was later added in 1827-9 by Thomas Telford. Both lakes feed the Cauldon Canal.

The car park, where we met had, until the 1950s, been a croquet lawn for the Heath family who had owned Greenway Bank Hall since buying it from Hugh Henshall in 1871. We then proceeded past the site of the now demolished hall and down into the valley to the head of the Serpentine where we met the route of the carriageway constructed by HHW from Biddulph Grange along the side of both lakes and on to St. Marys Church at Brown Edge. Part way further along, near the ruined warden's Tower, now home to five species of bats, we took a deviation to visit a secluded waterfall on the river Trent. Returning to the lake-side path we were fortunate to see a heron fishing. We then walked the length of the Knypersley pool stopping to witness a fisherman land a magnificent large bream, we then walked the length of the dam to the other side of the lake admiring two very friendly Muscovy ducks on the way, before following the path on the other side of the lake back to the Serpentine, tackling the path up the side of the valley back to the car park. A light lunch followed at Biddulph Grange in the partially restored drawing room, and then home for a well-earned rest.

*Phil Alcock*



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## Autumn Programme Summary and provisional future dates.

### September

Fri 8<sup>th</sup> –  
Sun 17<sup>th</sup> Heritage Open Days

Wed 13<sup>th</sup> Coach Trip: Dyrham Park, Gloucestershire.

Tue 19<sup>th</sup> Talk: Ross Underwood - "Kyrgyzstan"

### October

Thu 5<sup>th</sup> Car Trip: Staffordshire Museum Collection Stores, Beaconside..

Fri 13<sup>th</sup> Coach Trip: Mini Holiday to Salisbury

Tue 17<sup>th</sup> 7:15 EGM and Talk: Shaun Farrelly - "The Atlantic Telegraph"

Mon 23<sup>rd</sup> Car Trip: BCB Festival tour at All Saints Church by Clare Wood

### November

Thu 2<sup>nd</sup> Walk: Cheswardine and/or lunch at The Wharf Tavern.

Tue 21<sup>st</sup> Talk: Jill Rezzano - "New Vic Theatre"

### December

Tue 19<sup>th</sup> Christmas Lunch at The Swan With Two Necks.

### January

Tue 16<sup>th</sup> Talk: Bill Klemperer - "His Work"

### February

Tue 20<sup>th</sup> Talk: William Durose - "Sixteen in the Sixties"

### March

Tue 19<sup>th</sup> Talk: Susan Monro - "The Elizabeth's Group" on Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy

### April

TBA Coach Trip: Walsall Leather Museum and Art Gallery.

Tue 16<sup>th</sup> Talk: Steve Booth - "The Potteries Blitz - June 1940 - March 1941"

Sat 20<sup>th</sup> Guided tour of the Collection of Flowering Cherry Trees at Keele

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