

# **THE NORTH STAFFS National Trust Association**

## **Newsletter No. 96 and AUTUMN 2013 PROGRAMME**

Our Web Site – [northstaffsnt.org.uk](http://northstaffsnt.org.uk)



Arbury Hall



## ARRANGEMENTS FOR TRIP



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

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

**It will greatly help organisers** if you will make cheques payable to the “**The North Staffs National Trust Association**” and note that normally cheques are not cleared until after an event. Please also send a **separate cheque** and a **separate self-addressed** envelope for each separate event even when these go to one organiser. People who wish to ensure that they **sit together** on a coach should use one booking form.

**Note:** The committee does not consider it proper that an event should incur a loss and therefore reserves the right to cancel should there be insufficient support.

### **For Your Safety and Enjoyment**

Please look carefully at what is involved in an outing or a holiday before booking. Consider the starting time, the length of the day, the amount of walking and stair-climbing involved, the number of times of getting on and off a coach, etc. so that you can enjoy the day to the full by being able to participate in all aspects of the outing.

**If you have a problem with mobility or hearing, for example, please let the organiser know as soon as possible and we will try to arrange some help but we cannot guarantee to do so.**

**SPECIAL NOTE** Please note that the insurance carried by this Association through the National Trust does not provide Personal accident cover for members aged 80 years and above, or for children under 10.

# THE NORTH STAFFS National Trust Association

Newsletter No. 96

Autumn Programme 2013



## A Note From The Chair

My thanks to all the Members at the AGM who elected me as Chair and showed their appreciation of the Committee. In addition to myself, Cynthia Dumbelton was also transformed from Co-opted to Elected Member.

Thank you too, to David Dumbelton and Sue Pitt who retired from the Chair and the Committee respectively,

but who will continue to make welcome contributions to the Association.

This edition of the newsletter continues to celebrate the dedication and inventive work of Rose Wheat and the Programme Organising Group. There is something for everyone – especially those who book early. Work continues to avoid disappointing people whose bookings fall foul of the minimum numbers for a second coach, programme or venue capacity, mini bus phobia, and members who find weekdays difficult. Also to be built into the mix is the long- range weather forecasting!

Another feat performed annually is the programme of talks for members. Some Associations charge a sum per talk equivalent to our annual subscription. We are committed to our local service remaining free at the point of delivery. What fun to write the manifesto after the election!

I look forward to seeing you at the events featured in this Newsletter. As I write this on the longest day of the year I am anticipating the festive season. Please join us for the Christmas Social at Dudson Pottery. As the evening benefits our funds,

the Association might share with Dudson's my old school grace, "Lord, make us truly grateful for every cup and plateful"

Until we meet again enjoy the summer, if we have one.

Ralph White.

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## Meet the Committee

### Ralph White

The welcome Ralph has received in North Staffordshire has gone a long way to compensate for the disadvantage of being born in the wrong half of the creative county.

Ralph has been a member of the National Trust for 37 years, but interested in old buildings since being born in one that existed in 1296. By coincidence, he shares the first name of the occupant at the time.

Educated at Tettenhall College, he first read Law then changed to study General Practice Surveying. This led to work at Chartered Surveyors in the West Midlands and Shropshire, valuing and marketing property, but a particular interest in cataloguing fine arts and antiques for insurance or sale. This was the champagne taste and tea money period.

Having acquired expensive tastes, and a listed derelict wreck, Ralph was all too easily seduced into a murky world of money and questionable political policy. In return for working one day a week less for three times the salary, he became Head of Council House Sales in Wolverhampton. It was exciting, "Everyone hated us", he recalls.

To make amends for having depleted the housing stock, Ralph then took on roles which saw the improvement of the City's buildings, finishing as Principal Project Officer Urban renewal. This covered Refurbishment, Disabled Adaptions, Estate Action, 'Let's Crack Crime' and various environmental initiatives.

Out of hours and on leave Ralph had been designing corporate hospitality for the Staffordshire Building Society, mostly at National Trust Properties and Lichfield Festival. His detailed period settings for plays at the Crescent Theatre Birmingham also proved popular with the public and the press, resulting in

requests for interior design. Consequently he decided to leave Wolverhampton City Council and set up as a freelance designer.

For the last twenty years he has worked on houses, restaurants, churches, nursing-homes and a police station in England and Wales, not forgetting a house in Buffalo, New York.

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**Cynthia Dumbelton**

My parents both came from a Lancashire village of cotton-weaving mills, moving to Stanmore in North London on marriage. They purchased a house they saw at the Ideal

Home show which was built in Metroland at the end of what was then the Bakerloo Line (now extended and renamed the Jubilee Line). I was convent-school educated and went to work at the Bank of England where I learnt many different jobs, eventually working for the Adviser to the Governors on American Affairs. Part of my own daily duties was to despatch the Diplomatic Bag to Washington.

The Bank provided many social clubs and the one I enjoyed most was the dramatic society. We had our own small theatre for plays and revues but we had professional producers and orchestras for large musical productions performed in West End theatres when I danced and sang in most of the American musicals on their release from copyright in the early 1960s. I also sang in a chamber choir and made many friends.

David and I lived in neighbouring flats near Marble Arch where we met and married in 1970. I left the Bank after 20 years and we produced three sons when we lived in Buckinghamshire before moving to Stoke in 1978 where we've lived ever since. We have both been front-of-house volunteers for around 15 years at the New Victoria Theatre and I am a member of various guilds:

Embroiderers, Quilters and also the Guild of Spinners, Weavers and Dyers, so there is plenty to keep me amused. I also work for a national charity called Beanstalk helping children in primary schools to bring confidence and hopefully a love of books through a one-to-one relationship. I love books and have given books away for the last three years as part of World Book Night. I also attend a reading group.

We have been members of the National Trust for a long time but only members of the local Association for ten as we didn't know there was such a thing. David has done his best in his time as Chairman to bring knowledge of the Association to the wider public. We have organised holidays for the group which have been well received and hopefully this summer's trip to London will be similarly enjoyed.

Cynthia Dumbelton

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### **NEW MEMBERS SINCE LAST EDITION**

**We would like to extend a warm welcome to**

Anthea Bond  
Julie Colclough  
Joy Manley  
Janet Taylor  
A. N. Lindop.  
Jenny Latham

Mr and Mrs M Jane  
R.N. Temple  
Bruce and Anne Tranter  
Mr and Mrs K. Griffin  
Keith and Barbara Bickley.  
Eileen Handley

Helen Cooper-Jeffrey  
Geoffrey Dale  
Margaret Thomas  
Patricia Shaw  
T. Butler.  
Zillah Roberts

## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS.**

### **Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> September – Talk at the N.S. Conference Centre at 7.30pm. John Butterworth. Hitting the Headlines (as a newspaper editor)**

John has been a journalist for 40 years a newspaper editor for 25 years and was awarded the M.B.E. in 2008 for his services to journalism and charity. Since 1993 he has been a Reader in the Church of England. He enjoys giving talks and has spoken to a variety of different groups and organisations over the last 30 years.

He will give us a presentation about local newspapers, the joys of being an editor and also some stories about what goes on in a weekly newspaper office.

John has been editor of four newspapers: The Leek Post and Times, The Bromsgrove Advertiser / Messenger series and the Shrewsbury Chronicle. Plus running his own newspaper, The Stone and Eccleshall Gazette.

With all the recent scandals in the world of national newspaper publishing this “behind the scenes” look at local newspaper publishing should be most enlightening.

### **Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> September Coach outing to Birmingham Jewellery Quarter and Soho House**

The Museum of the Jewellery Quarter is a fascinating time-capsule. After coffee and biscuits on arrival we will be taken in groups into the premises of Smith and Pepper for a guided tour of these offices and workshops which closed in 1981 when the owners decided to retire and simply locked the doors after business and walked away! Years later the premises were opened as a museum; nothing had been changed and the tour offers a remarkable insight into the methods and working conditions of the craftsmen and women who were employed there. There are also interesting exhibitions within the museum.

After lunch (at own cost – there are many venues nearby) a short coach ride will take us to Soho House, where we can explore this recently renovated Georgian house, favourite meeting-place of the Lunar Society and home of Matthew Boulton, industrialist and entrepreneur, who claimed “I sell here what all the world desires to have – Power!” There will be Room Stewards to answer any questions or give information and there is a café for anyone wishing to buy tea.

Coach departs from School Street at 9.00am and we shall arrive back in Newcastle at around 6.30pm

Cost £23.50 (non-members £25.50) to include coach, driver’s tip, tea/coffee on arrival, guided tour of the Jewellery Quarter museum, and admission to Soho House. Please apply to Mrs. Rose Wheat 12 West Avenue Newcastle -



ST5 ONB Tel: 01782 616113 enclosing cheque and AE for information.  
Closing Date September 11<sup>th</sup>.

**Tuesday 8th October – Talk at the N.S. Conference Centre at 7.30pm  
By Sarah Kay.**

**The Power of Conservation in Action - Recent and On-going Conservation  
At Attingham Park Shropshire.**

Sarah Kay – Curator at Attingham Park has agreed to repeat her much-praised lecture given at The Barber Institute earlier this year. This illustrated talk features Attingham Re-Discovered, an ambitious, long-term conservation project which began in 2006. Sarah Kay will discuss the unusual approach the Attingham team has taken of engaging the public in the decision-making processes of the project, increasing understanding and engendering support.

We hope to hear of the outstanding work on the Butler's Room and have news of the dramatic work to save the glass roof over the Picture Gallery.

**Saturday 12th October: Car outing to Boscobel House, Brewood, (ST19  
9AR) and Moseley Old Hall, Near Wolverhampton (WV10 7HY).  
Maximum 40.**

After King Charles II's defeat at Worcester in 1651 he fled north past Wolverhampton and sought refuge with the Royalist Penderel family at Boscobel and the nearby White Ladies as the towns were hostile towards him. After an abortive ride towards Wales the king returned to Boscobel and spent the night in the safety of an oak tree in its grounds. Members will be given a guided tour and coffee will be available from a vending machine at members own cost.

Like King Charles himself, members will move on to Moseley Old Hall where the king stayed for two nights under the protection of Thomas Whitgreave, a known Catholic, and his priest. The Whitgreaves lived at Moseley until 1820 after which the house was encased in brick. It passed to the National Trust in 1962 and its subsequent restoration is said to be one of the most successful exercises of the Trust. Members will be given a guided tour of the house which is enhanced by the delightful knot garden.

Members should arrive at Boscobel not later than 11.00am and will leave at approximately 1.00pm driving to Moseley Old Hall for not later than 2.15pm.



Refreshments such as soup, sandwiches and cakes are available at Moseley Old Hall at members own cost, otherwise members should bring a picnic or seek refreshment at a local hostelry.

**MEMBERS MUST BRING NATIONAL TRUST CARDS FOR MOSELEY OLD HALL AND ENGLISH HERITAGE MEMBERS MUST BRING THEIR CARDS FOR ACCESS TO BOSCOBEL.**

Cost : £7.50 for Association members but if you are also a member of English Heritage this is reduced to £2 per head. Non members £3 per head plus admission charges payable on the day at the properties.

Directions on application.

Please apply to Peter Moxon, Millstone House, Butterton, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs, ST5 4EB, Tel: 01782 616337 enclosing a cheque and a stamped addressed envelope.

Closing date: 25<sup>th</sup> September.

**Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> November: Walk – The Madeley Explorer**

We stay close to home for this one, a gentle ramble through farmland and woods near the village of Madeley. It does not take long to get away from the bustle of the village, crossing over the railway tracks, there to find an area of surprising calm and beauty.

This walk will be about five miles, with around 15 stiles to cross, but no steep hills to climb!

We start and finish at the Madeley Centre, which is a superb new building for community events, with its own café/restaurant. Please meet there at 11.30am and we will aim to be back for Sunday lunch at 2pm.

Cost £2.00 for members, £2.50 for guests (pay on the day). Children and dogs are welcome, at no charge.

Book your place with Richard Adams: email to [rjadams@doctors.org.uk](mailto:rjadams@doctors.org.uk) or by post to: Gables End, Holly Bank, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 8FT, enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Telephone: 01782 646054

**Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> November – Talk at the N.S. Conference Centre at 7.30pm  
Peter Hawthorn, The Animals Victoria Cross.**

The Animals Victoria Cross, known also as the Dickin Medal, was first awarded in 1943 with Maria Dickin, the founder of the PDSA responsible for its introduction. Between 1943 and 1949 it was awarded to many animals including dogs, horses and birds, No further awards were made until it was revived in the year 2000, since then a further 16 medals have been awarded.

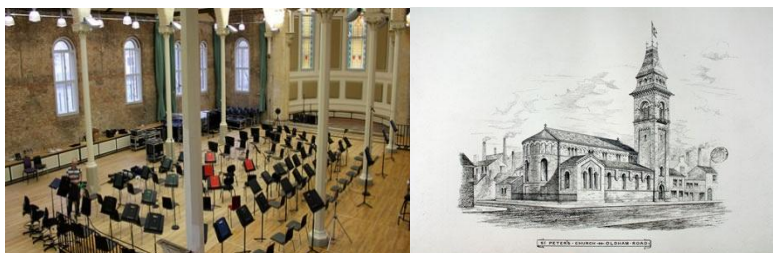
Members who went on our coach outing to Bletchley Park in March (see write up in this Newsletter) will recall hearing of the heroics of homing pigeons during the second world war, with many of them receiving medals and citations.

Peter Hawthorne, a lecturer and published author is an expert in this field and will explain how the medal came into being and will graphically tell stories of some of these animals many of which braved terrifying situations, He also includes interviews with some of their owners.

In 2012 Peter, who has also given well- received talks to other N.T.

Associations, had a book published on the subject of tonights talk and signed copies will be on sale this evening.

**Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> November – Coach Outing to Manchester Bridgewater Hall. A Day Out in Manchester**



Join us again to hear the world renowned Halle Orchestra in their Manchester home, the Bridgewater Hall with the (optional) bonus of a private visit to their new rehearsal space, the recently converted St.Peter's Church, Ancoats.

The morning in Manchester is free for you to explore the city's many museums and art galleries or even to do some early Christmas shopping.

Alternatively, you may prefer to join us on a leisurely **walking tour** (approx. 1 hour) of **Ancoats and the Northern Quarter**, starting with coffee at the Palace Hotel, a converted 19<sup>th</sup> century railway warehouse. Ancoats was the centre of the northern editions of daily newspapers and a large Italian community and has

at its heart the former Anglican church of St Peter's, now a rehearsal space for the Halle and its ensembles. By special arrangement, we will go into the Halle St Peter's, a "commodious brick edifice in the Lombard style" by the Manchester architectural practice of Isaac Holden and Son which was consecrated in 1860. The Northern Quarter has been rebranded as the Soho/Boho area of Manchester, full of bars and retro clothes shops, but architecturally it is a microcosm of Manchester with weavers' cottages, mills and warehouses telling the Manchester story from 1750s to the present. Our guide for this walk will again be Andrew Derbyshire who proved so popular with our members on the last visit to Manchester.

### **Concert Programme:**

Dvorák Legends

Tchaikovsky Variations on a Rococo Theme

Debussy Prélude à l'après midi d'un faune

Stravinsky The Firebird: Suite (1945)

Hallé Orchestra | Leader Lyn Fletcher

Eduardo Portal conductor | Philip Higham cello

'It is a delightful piece, and the fresh, joyous and rich invention of the man is simply enviable', enthused Brahms after hearing Dvorák's wonderfully poetic *Legends*. Equally delightful is Tchaikovsky's tuneful tribute to the composers of the eighteenth century. His 'Rococo Variations' are performed by rising star of the cello, Philip Higham. Then for the exotic, erotic atmosphere of Debussy's *Prélude à l'après midi d'un faune* in which a faun dreams of two beautiful nymphs and wonders how best to savour the memory.

Glowingly orchestrated and replete with Stravinsky's characteristic rhythmic drive and sense of colour, *The Firebird* – a setting of a popular Russian fairy tale – established him as the major new voice in twentieth-century music.

Depart School Street 9.00a.m. Return for 5.30p.m. (subject to traffic)

Cost £34 (£35 for guests) to include Centre Stalls ticket (face value £26),

Concert programme worth £3 (subject to availability), coach travel and driver's gratuity

£8 for guided walk including refreshments. (Limited to 25 members)

**EARLY BOOKING ESSENTIAL**

**PLEASE NOTE ALL CHEQUES WILL BE CASHED AT THE END OF  
SEPTEMBER**

Please apply to Mrs.P.Moore. 26 Parkway, Trentham ST4 8AG, enclosing a cheque and stamped addressed envelope.

Tel: 01782 657645

**Closing date for applications 21st September.**

**Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> November – Visit to Hanley Museum.  
Behind the Scenes at the City Museum.  
Max 30.**

Most of us are probably frequent visitors to the City Museum, but this opportunity to take part in two guided tours 'behind the scenes' will be special. Here is the opportunity for us to see some of the normally unseen world of famous ceramic collection during one of the tours and to view part of the extensive wonderful costume collection during the other. Which tour you will see first depends on whether the group is large enough to require splitting; it will not be possible to pay for just one of the tours.

We will meet for an 11.30 start and there will be time for lunch in the museum (at own expense) before the second tour, finishing at 3pm

Please apply to Cynthia Dumbelton 32 The Lea Trentham ST48DY enclosing cheque for £12 and a stamped addressed envelope Tel.01782 641756.

**Closing Date November 15th.**

**Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> December Christmas Social Event:  
Dudson Museum from 6.30pm Maximum 60.**

Meet your Association friends in a unique venue!

Our Christmas social event this year will be in the interesting surroundings of the Dudson museum in Hanley, with seasonal refreshments and a visit to the museum, which is inside the old bottle oven, and will be decorated for the festive season. There will be a buffet of savoury and sweet items, and a glass of wine or fruit juice in the modern café. Across the lighted courtyard we shall enter the museum for a talk about the family firm, then we can view pieces from the past and also see examples of their present production – elegant designer ware for the hotel and catering industries.

There are two floors in the museum and the upper floor is accessible only by a narrow spiral staircase, but there is a video link so that those who cannot manage the stairs can still see the items upstairs.

Cost £11.50 (non-members £12.50)

Meet in the entrance to the Dudson Centre, Hope Street, Hanley, for 6.30pm. There is ample parking, including disabled spaces, for £1.00 after 6.00pm. The event will finish at approx. 9.00pm

Please apply to Mrs. A. Anderton, 14, Berne Avenue, Newcastle. ST5 2QJ, Tel.01782613024 including cheque and SAE.

**Closing date November 27th**

## Booking Details

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Please apply to Mrs. Rose Wheat 12 West Avenue Newcastle ST5 ONB Tel: 01782 616113 enclosing cheque and AE for information.

Arrive approx. 10.30am for coffee and biscuits. Groups will go round the Museum and galleries in turn until approx. 12.45 Lunch will be at own cost. Rejoin coach at 2.20pm for trip to Soho House. Café available.

Leave at 4.00pm – reach Newcastle approx. 5.30 - 6.00pm

Lunch will be at own cost. Suitable Venues Nearby.

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## Booking Details

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**Booking Form**

<b>Name(s)</b>	<b>Association number</b>	<b>£</b>
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<b>Address</b>		<b>Total</b>
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Tel. number ----- Email address -----

For booking details see reverse of this form

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**EARLY BOOKING ESSENTIAL. PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL CHEQUES WILL BE CASHED AT THE END OF SEPTEMBER.**

£8.00 for optional guided walk, including refreshments (MAX. 25)

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Second tour finishes at 3.00 pm.

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Closing date November 27th

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## REPORTS FROM PREVIOUS VISITS

### February 27<sup>th</sup> Stafford County Records Office Car Visit.

Precious paper documents, whether unique or day to day records, deserve people who really recognize and want to share their significance and value. The very professional and dedicated team at Stafford County Records Office introduced us to and guided us through this superb, growing and internationally recognized archive.

To extend its use the content is currently being reproduced in digital form. The size and variety of the archive comes from a combination of historical archives within the county and the surrounding areas.

Collections of documents represented come from local towns, including architecture and planning, estates, churches, schools as well as matter to do with lives, occupations and past times of ordinary people. Being up to date the archive even includes items on the latest Olympic Games.

We were shown and actually allowed to handle selected items, even a very rare family tree. We were given glimpses of the informative, important, exciting, entertaining and sometimes salacious insights which can be drawn from their contents.

The archive building itself reflects both the fragility and the importance of the collection as a whole. There is high security, no windows, climate control and special fire proofing and suppression.

The storage is designed to protect and prolong the life of the paper contents with hanging, rolling, stacking and boxing systems that minimise damage through use.

This practical attention to use as well as care for items was also clearly shown when we were invited into the conservators, workshop.

Here with minimal chemical or physical damage different paper items, often of great age, including maps, pictures and books could be cleaned, repaired, restored and made strong enough to be handled and examined for study.

This was a tantalising introduction to a specialist yet accessible world.

Special thanks to Archivist Rebecca Jackson and the Conservator Richard Nichols and Cara Hughes

Thanks to for Penny Moore who unobtrusively and efficiently organised the trip

Martyn Kelly

## **Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March Talk by Steve Birks. The Acropolis of the Dead.**

This was a fascinating and often light hearted presentation by Steve Birks, a local historian, into the history and information of the Potteries to be found in Victorian cemeteries.

Until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it had been the norm for the dead to be buried in the Church yard, Thereafter, the dead were buried in purpose built cemeteries . The first was Hanley cemetery built in 1860, followed by cemeteries in Hartshill, Longton, Fenton and Burslem.

In 1882, the Stoke-on –Trent Borough Council decided that each cemetery should have two chapels. One for Church of England and the other for the Non Conformists. The decision to have two chapels was not surprising as Colin Minton Campbell, the Mayor and most prominent member of the council, was a strong supporter of the Church of England. The council appointed Charles Lynam as the architect for the chapels. He was also the architect for the Villas on London Road Stoke

The layout became a very critical feature of the cemeteries. The cemeteries were divided on religious lines. One area was for the Church of England worshippers, another area for the Non Conformist's and a third area for the Roman Catholics. Interestingly, the Potteries had a very strong Methodist presence and the followers were buried in the Non Conformist area. This resulted in the Non Conformist's graves similar in number to the ones in the Church of England area.

Each of the three designated divisions by religion were subdivided into four classes of plots; 1<sup>st</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> class grounds. The first class plots were situated in the most prominent position, around the cemetery chapels and on the highest ground. The second class plots were immediately adjacent occupying the middle part of the cemetery. The third class plots were on the lower ground which was often poorly drained. The 4<sup>th</sup> class plots were often located in very poor muddy conditions in the lowest lying areas.

Following the 1<sup>st</sup> World War, there was uniformity regarding the cemetery layout with no further segregation.

Bob Winter.

## **Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> March Stafford Castle Walk**

A pleasant spring morning 32 of us gathered in Stafford Square. I must say we were rather bemused to find the half marathon runners and supporters meeting there too Hundreds of them. After a little confusion, we were on our way

passing ST.Mary's church and the court house, then along the river past the old castle works and over fields. Very muddy boots soon clogged up, after much slipping and sliding, we reached the bottom of the mound where the castle is built. One last climb and we were there.

The castle can be dated back to 1100AD built by Robert de Stafford. It has known many risings and fallings. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Ralph Earl of Stafford ordered a stone keep on top of the motte in 1347. Stafford castle was in its hey day in 1444. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century however it slumped back into deterioration. The Jerringham family rebuilt the castle in the manner of a four storey structure. The 1950's saw it back in ruin derelict once more.

Some walkers took lunch at the Swan Hotel, I am sure they will have enjoyed it

Many thanks to Richard for a great walk.

Brian and Gwen Wilson.

### **Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March – Coach outing to Bletchley Park**

In 1938 with war on the horizon the Government were looking for somewhere to house their cypher/encryption centre. Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> March – Coach outing to Bletchley Park

In 1938 with war on the horizon the Government were looking for somewhere to house their cypher/encryption centre. This needed to be in the countryside not too far from London but near to the major road and rail links and within easy distance of both Oxford and Cambridge Universities from where the best mathematical brains were recruited. Upon the death of its owner, the rambling Bletchley Park country estate in deepest Buckinghamshire came on the market complete with a Victorian mansion, lake and parkland. The government purchased the whole estate for the sum of £7,500. Thus the home of the "Codebreakers" was established.

Following a comfortable journey down to Bletchley on our Leon's coach we enjoyed a sandwich lunch in the mansion followed by an introductory talk by our excellent guide Bob. He told us that in 1941, Alan Turing and his colleagues, starved of the manpower and equipment they required to carry out their work, contacted Churchill directly and he agreed to meet their demands in full, promising "action this day". Although several thousand personnel, from boffins to cleaners, worked at Bletchley over the years with a daily convoy of 300 buses going to and from, everyone was sworn to secrecy under the Official Secrets Act and never revealed the nature of their work (be it high or humble) to anyone and in most cases took their secrets to the grave.

We were given a photographic and verbal description of the German Enigma Coding Machine with which the enemy used different codes each day from millions of combinations available. It was the task of Turing and his colleagues, including Polish mathematicians, to crack these complex codes. This had to be achieved by a combination of brain power, and machines and great dedication- No computers or Google in those days!

We then had a tour of the site followed by free time to explore the many huts comprising typical wartime single-storey flat-roofed buildings. These house hundreds of original photographs, cinefilm, pieces of equipment, correspondence and other memorabilia including old PBX switchboards staffed by the mainly female operators. We learned how the capture of a German U-Boat containing Enigma manuals helped in breaking the initial codes only for the enemy to then widen the scope of the machines and codes. These were not totally solved until the capture of a second U-Boat some two years later which revealed further information to our codebreakers.

Neither must we forget the 250,000 Pigeons which were dropped by parachute over enemy lines to bring back, in tiny canisters, information gleaned by our agents which was vital in cracking the codes and gathering intelligence. Some 32 Pigeons were awarded the Dikin Medal which is the Animal V.C. and their names appear on a roll of honour.

Finally we were shown code-breaking punch cards and tape machines in action and, most strikingly, a fully operational rebuilt 'Colossus' machine recognised as the world's first electronic, programmable computer with 25,000 valves and several miles of wiring. The original was designed by Tommy Flowers in 1940 but was kept secret for decades until in the 1990's it was rebuilt over a period of 14 years by using what little was left of the original machine but with a great deal of ingenuity too. It now occupies a whole room on its own-befitting the forerunner of today's computers,

Sadly, Alan Turing committed suicide in 1954 at the age of 42 having been accused of homosexual activities, However as a tribute to him and his dedicated colleagues at Bletchley (whose efforts it is said shortened the war by some two years thereby saving many thousands of lives) I would ask you to remember their *modus operandi*. To solve the problem that initially seems insoluble proceed as follows: eliminate the impossible; ignore the improbable; discard the unlikely and you are left with the most likely. Brainpower and unstinting dedication will then hopefully lead you to the correct solution. At least this dictum worked for the Codebreakers!

Many thanks to Peter Thompson, ably assisted by Ann, for a fascinating and memorable day out

Roger Cartlidge.



## **Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> April Shugborough's Gardens Through the Seasons.**

Derek Higgot, a gardener at Shugborough, told us about the several types of garden to be found there and showed us wonderful slides of the many plants and trees grown on the estate, and the various landscapes at different seasons. Some of the most impressive slides were trees viewed from a distance with the sun shining on the snow or frost.

We heard about the Arboretum, a favourite of the late Lord Lichfield, which has been open to the public since 2008. It contains many types of trees including 180 species of oak from Asia, Europe and North America. The Walled Garden is now being restored to its former glory by the gardeners and 40 volunteers. Many vegetables are grown and excess produce is sold.

Wildlife on the estate is encouraged- the old Rose Garden is now the 'Bees and Butterflies' garden. Cut logs are left for beetles to live in and only the brushwood is cleared. Bulbs planted by the public add to the carpet of bluebells already there. Deer also live in the woodland area and there are swans on the lake, fed by the River Sow which runs through the estate with its wonderful Essex Bridge.

We saw slides of the beautiful Georgian house in which the Lichfield family lived and the many monuments in the surrounding park including the Tower of the Winds- once a dairy and a gambling house!- and the much- photographed Chinese House and its fascinating red bridge.

At the end of this very interesting, and at times amusing talk, many of us were feeling that we could not wait to visit Shugborough again.

Sue Corlett.

## **Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> April Beer Canals and Murder, Stone Canal Walk**

The day was cold and blustery as we met at Stone Railway Station for the beginning of our walk. Led by David and Cynthia Dumbelton.

Starting at the towpath near Fillybrook, David, (a self-confessed 'Canal Nutter'), explained the importance of the waterways, not only to Stone but to Staffordshire and beyond. The canal, linking the Mersey and Trent, reached Stone in 1777, marking the Beginning of a new age of prosperity for the town.

The difference between narrow boats and barges was explained, and features too numerous to mention were indicated:- a replacement milestone sponsored by enthusiasts in New Jersey; a rare horse tunnel, stone work and metal rollers grooved by the countless tow ropes; a curved wall to accommodate cranes,---it seemed that every step produced new points of interest! We passed various boat yards, and stopped to admire colourful canal art in a Chandler's

window. Interesting architectural features were seen at the Joules' brewery from which goods were transported by canal to Liverpool and Burton and thence world-wide.

A welcome coffee stop organised by Cynthia gave us an unexpected opportunity of spending our break on a canal boat. To our surprise sex and violence also featured on the walk as Cynthia related the story of Christina Collins, who in 1839 was raped and murdered whilst travelling as a passenger on a Pickford's boat. A modern sculpture on the canalside now commemorates her demise (Christina's, not Cynthia's!)

Before the end of the walk we paused to admire the old workhouse and the 16<sup>th</sup> century Star Inn (and heard more tales of cannons, a damaged lock and a knocked down bridge!) A short detour to Wyatt's, the oldest holiday hire company in the country, and a stroll up the High Street concluded this most enjoyable walk.

Our thanks of course must go to the Dumbeltons. We have come to expect the very best from them, and the day more than lived up to expectations

Margaret Glanville

## **Tuesday 23 April Car outing to the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas.**

The National Memorial Arboretum is a spiritually uplifting place which honours the fallen, recognises service and sacrifice and fosters pride in our country. Perhaps befitting for the start of the visit we met Peter, our chief guide for the day, in the Millennium Chapel for an Act of Remembrance and a welcoming talk. We were given a brief history of the origin of the 2 minutes silence and then at 11 o'clock the Last Post was sounded. We all stood, with our own thoughts, to observe the 2 minute silence which was concluded with a recording of a trumpeter sounding the reveille.

In his welcoming speech Peter gave us the history of the National Memorial saying that it is not a cemetery. It's a place of life, represented by 50,000 trees planted on the site where older and younger generations alike can wander and wonder. Covering 150 acres, the Arboretum has something for everyone. It is a peaceful and beautiful place to remember loved ones, particularly those who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. The trees and more than 200 dedicated memorials on the site make the Arboretum a living tribute that will forever acknowledge the sacrifices made by the Armed Forces and civil services of this country. Importantly, the focus isn't totally military and acknowledges

Police, Fire and Rescue and Ambulance service personnel who have fallen whilst on duty.

The Arboretum was the brainchild of Commander David Childs CBE who wished to see established a national focus for Remembrance. Following a meeting with Leonard Cheshire VC, a successful appeal was launched by the then Prime Minister, John Major.

We were joined by a second guide, Jane, and split into two groups for a tour of a portion of the Arboretum. This included the magnificent Armed Forces Memorial which honours the 16,000 UK Armed Services Personnel who have died in the service of their country since the end of WWII. After lunch we were free to visit all the areas of the site we did not have time to visit on the pre lunch guided tour. With all the poor weather around it was a joy to visit the Arboretum on a particularly warm and sunny day. As one visitor put it in the visitor's book, "This is a very beautiful place and a place to be very proud of Thank you."

Peter Thompson

### **Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> May Car Outing to The Heath House Tean**

There is very little to add to the report of Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> September by the Revd. Townsend about the visit by 50 members of the Association.

Again the visit was oversubscribed which in itself testifies to the success of the visit and the curiosity of members over a magnificent house on the edge of the Potteries. 40 members appreciated a very warm welcome and an informative tour of the house and garden by the present owner Ben Philips and his cousin Flavia Swann.

Peter Moxon.

Many thanks to Peter for once again organising the trip.

### **Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> May Talk after the AGM by Andrew Lound**

#### **'To See the Beginning of Time'**

Appearing in the guise of an 18<sup>th</sup> century astronomer, Andrew first gave us a brief account of some early astronomers, such as Tycho Brahe and Galileo, then explained something of the problems and technicalities of developing optical telescopes. He referred to one of his heroes, Christiaan Huygens and entertained us with a short biography of the polymath, Edwin Hubble.

We then marvelled at a sequence of amazing and beautiful images from the Hubble telescope, which can look further and deeper into space than any previous instrument. Andrew presented a wealth of statistics about millions of miles and billions of light years, and although the figures were meaningless to most of the audience, we all appreciated the spectacle and the drama of the images. NASA believes that Hubble has another two years of useful life before it stops transmitting and eventually its successor, the Webb telescope, will take over its function.

In reply to some probing questions, his usual answer was, “No one knows” – which he said was the honest response of most professional astronomers to those questions which are the simplest to ask but are impossible to answer!

Paul Anderton

### **Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May George Eliot Country**

After two days of most unseasonable weather we were very fortunate to make our visit in dry and intermittently sunny weather. A comprehensive series of visits covered the major buildings that George Eliot would have known before she left for Coventry and London, never to return, due the intransigence of her brother, Isaac.

We began our visits at the Chilvers Coton Heritage Centre with coffee and biscuits in the old school, which incorporates rooms from a free school founded in 1745. There are evocative rooms devoted to local history with an enviable collection of early photographs of the locality.

Across the road is All Saints Church, it was rebuilt with the aid of Prisoners of War, many of whom were skilled craftsmen. They created some fine carvings, perhaps the most striking being on the lectern. George Eliot attended this church until she reached the age of 21 years. The Church yard contains the graves of her parents and her brother and is the setting for the climax of her first story.

We moved on to Griff House where Eliot lived until she was 21. Despite its conversion into a restaurant and a hotel, much of that house is still recognisable. On our way to lunch we were invited to enter through the front door and flagged hallway that she would have known. Much of “The Mill on the Floss” is set in this building, the attic of which plays a large part in the heroine’s inner life and still exists as part of the Hotel Manager’s home.

On to Arbury Hall which Eliot knew as a child, her father being the Agent to this huge estate. Principally known for the Gothic improvements made to the

ancient building, its principal rooms are considered one of the finest displays of this style of architecture in Britain. Its appeal is a matter of personal taste. On to see the exterior of South Farm on the Arbury estate, the house in which George Eliot was born, then on to the hamlet of Astley. Here is another church that Eliot knew, her parents had been married there. Once a large collegiate church, various calamities led to major rebuilding. It retains ancient choir stalls and wall paintings. From the church yard we looked across to Astley Castle, now in the care of the Landmark Trust.

We were most ably guided by Mr John Burton, Chairman of the George Eliot Fellowship and admirably looked after by Anne Beaumont assisted by Cynthia Dumbelton. Altogether it was an interesting and enjoyable visit.

Alun Davies

### **Wednesday 22nd May Car outing: 'A double bill at Shugborough'**

The group was met by our excellent guide to follow the 'Myths and Mysteries' tour of the Shugborough grounds. We were shown deliberate planting of light and dark areas, with views through to particular features of the landscape. Near the River Sow, we learnt how a flood in 1895 destroyed a pagoda, and then crossed the blue bridge with its strawberry decoration to the Island Arboretum Garden, with some extraordinary species of oak, this area being Patrick Lichfield's lasting legacy to Shugborough. We walked on to the Cat's Monument, either a memorial to a ship's cat or a family pet, Persian Khouli-Khan. The 1747 Chinese House was a very early example of an oriental garden structure in Britain, designed from a sketch made in Canton by Sir Piercy Brett, Admiral Anson's second-in-command on the Centurion. The Shepherd's Monument bears a supposedly enigmatic code, thought by some to lead to the Holy Grail, but which probably is an inscription in honour of 'wife, sister and widow'. The sculpted relief is based on *Et in Arcadia Ego*, by Poussin, but reversed and with probably deliberate changes. The Doric Temple stood at the entrance to the original kitchen garden and is one of the first buildings in England in the Neo-Greek style.

After this very interesting tour, we repaired to the café for lunch and then enjoyed a tour of the house. I found the private apartments of Patrick Lichfield most interesting, especially the collection of his photographs. Then we faced the formidable housekeeper, as possible recruits to the household staff. Some of us were probably unemployable, with open top buttons, or possibly worse, 'painted' finger-nails! Her talk about life below stairs and what was expected of

staff was fascinating and despite our failings, we were allowed a delicious cream tea.

I then explored the servants' quarters, again encountering the fearsome housekeeper! We saw the amazing menus for banquets and heard of the immense quantities of beer consumed. This area is particularly well planned and the costumed staff there were very informative. I always like the servants' areas of stately homes, perhaps because they are nearer to 'real life' than the grand rooms of the rich and noble.

Many thanks to Rose Wheat for a splendid day.

Kay Williams

## **Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> June Car Outing to Middleton Hall Tamworth.**

Middleton is referred to in the Domesday Inquest of 1086 and part of the Hall as it stands to-day dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> Century

The Hall is managed by a team of Trustees and Volunteers and the Chairman and one of the trustees told members of the incredibly long and detailed history of the Hall and its occupiers.

Eventually the Hall itself was unoccupied and suffered from the ravages of time, weather, neglect and trespassers from 1966. In 1977 a group of conservationists began to explore the possibilities of obtaining a lease to restore and maintain the property. In 1980 The Middleton Hall trust was granted a 75 year lease at peppercorn rent (since increased in monetary terms) .

From 1980 onward the Trustees and their team of volunteers have performed wonders in restoring the building and gardens. The members of the association were amazed by and full of admiration of the efforts, skills and devotion of all the volunteers.

Much of the income of the Trust is now generated from weddings, conferences, lectures and day visitors. Well Done!

Peter Moxon.

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### Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all who submitted photographs.

**Next copy date 1<sup>st</sup> November**





The group on the visit to George Eliot Country.

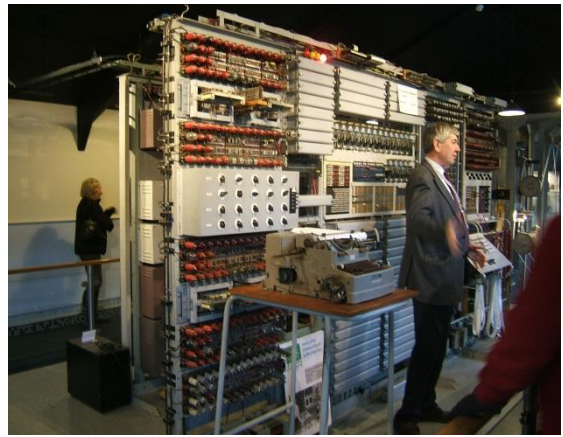
Chilvers Coton All Saints Churchyard where George Eliots Parents and Brother are Buried

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The Orangery on the Visit to Heath House





Bletchley Park Mansion and part of Colossus the Code Breaking Machine



Middleton Hall 16<sup>th</sup> Century Barn

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2013 - 2014**

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## Autumn Programme 2013.

<b>Tuesday 17th September</b>	Talk at NS Conference Centre	John Butterworth Hitting the Headlines..
<b>Thursday 26th September</b>	Coach Trip	Birmingham Jewellery Quarter and Soho House
<b>Tuesday 8th October</b>	Talk at NS Conference Centre	Sarah Kay, <i>Conservation At Attingham'</i>
<b>Saturday 12th October</b>	Car Outing	Boscobel and Moseley Old Hall.
<b>Sunday 3rd November</b>	Walk	Madeley area.
<b>Wednesday 6th November</b>	Talk at NS Conference Centre	Peter Hawthorne <i>'The Animals' Victoria Cross'</i>
<b>Wednesday 13th November</b>	Coach Trip	Manchester and Halle Concert.
<b>Wednesday 20th November</b>	Car Outing	Behind the Scenes at the City Museum.
<b>Wednesday 11th December</b>	Christmas Social Evening	Dudson's Museum, Hanley.

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### Dates for your Diary

<b>Tuesday 14 January 2014</b>	Talk at NS Conference Centre	Vince Williams, 'Mountain Search and Rescue in the UK'.
<b>Thursday 15 May</b>	Coach Outing	Morgan Car Factory.
<b>Wednesday 4 June</b>	Coach Outing	Wombourne. Wodehouse.
<b>15<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> June</b>	Holiday	Northern Ireland
<b>Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2014</b>	Talk	Howard Bagshaw <i>'Lest We Forget'</i>