BIRMINGHAM
National Trust
Association

A voluntary Association of National Trust members founded in 1991 to promote and prosper the work of the National Trust

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Newsletter

Issue 29 Spring 2006
From the Chairman

In the past year we have continued to enjoy a full programme of lectures, outings and social events, and have restored a holiday trip to our repertoire.

This was our last season of Monday evening lectures at the Friends Meeting House by Bournville Green. We seem to have been determined to leave this venue with a flourish. Highlights so far this season have included an acoustic feast of whistles, and a visual feast of buttons and other regalia - both from long standing Birmingham manufacturers. We heard 130 years worth of whistles - ranging from those for the police and football referees, to the more exotic duck lure for the American market. We saw examples of over 300 years of military and other insignia - including a replica set of buttons from the uniforms of both sides of the American Civil War. A presentation set had been given to President Clinton at the time of the G8 Summit. They were made in silver using the original dies still in the possession of Firmin and Sons. What we saw was a base metal replica set; but the sense of history was still (literally) tangible.

Next Autumn our Monday evening lectures will move to the Friends Meeting House at Cotteridge. We look forward to Mary Parker arranging many exciting talks there too, and hope that you will continue to support the Monday evening lectures at their new venue. Our Tuesday morning lectures will be returning to a rejuvenated room in Northfield Library.
after a brief excursion to the Hall of the Baptist Church in Northfield. I am happy to say that our temporary move did not deter you from coming along.

Thanks to all the organizers of our social events, our many outings (whether by coach, car or walking boots), and also to David Calver for all the leaflets and tickets he has designed and produced for us this past year.

Last year's successful Strawberry Tea was the last one to be hosted by our President Grace Darby in her garden in King's Heath. This summer we will have a Garden Party at a new venue in Iris Close, Weoley Hill by courtesy of Molly Archer and Jean Powell. Here is a sneak preview of their garden. Black and white pictures can rarely do justice to a garden; but I hope the jolly flower-pot man will appeal to your sense of fun.

If you are unsure where Iris Close is, and fear you may get lost on the way, there will be a sketch map on the back of your ticket! Which brings me to a final thank you to my wife Christine, who has produced several
Wartime Memories 1939-45

In 1939 I was living near Cannon Hill Park and my aunt lived round the corner, the gates to our back gardens met. One day she came running up our garden path saying "Put your radio on quick, the Prime Minister is going to give a speech, I am sure it means war." It was the 3rd September. My mother, sister, aunt and self all stood in our breakfast room listening to the Prime Minister. It was a short speech finishing with the words "WE ARE AT WAR WITH GERMANY." Life was never the same again and for the next five or six years we were at war with Germany. Some people's lives were changed for ever.

First the Blackout - no street lights were permitted; all car lights were dimmed considerably; we all had to have blackout curtains, no cracks anywhere - if there were we could get fined. At night outside it was literally black to reduce the chance of being seen by enemy aircraft.

I was working in the Almoner's office of the Children's Hospital and because it was social work I was not called up into the services, however we worked long hours because of staff shortages. I have memories that because of bus shortage and long hours I sometimes had to walk all the way from the hospital in Ladywood Road to Cannon Hill Park which was near where I lived. This was in the blackout - not even a torch to see my way - any time up to 9pm. Usually there was a bus to take me to the hospital in the mornings, if I could get on it. Those of us working at the hospital had badges to wear which the conductors were expected to take notice of but I do not think they did!

Evacuation
Children had to leave their parents. They were evacuated to families in the country away from the towns and the bombing. Sometimes whole schools were evacuated together. Some of this evacuation of children was very successful but some was not. When children leave their parents and go to live with complete strangers in a strange environment, different food etc., it can and did cause problems and some children were soon back home.

Bombing
There was an anti-aircraft gun in Cannon Hill Park, during air raids it sometimes went off with a loud booooom! Always making us jump. One night while in our very good air-raid shelter in my aunt's garden it went very quiet and I peeped outside. To my shock the whole area was lit up with flares and incendiary bombs which were falling from the sky. It was as light as day. One incendiary bomb fell on the roof at the back of my aunt's house.
by Olive Allen

and slid off into the garden before exploding. Another one did a similar thing on the front of the house. Apart from a few slates being broken there was little damage, was she not lucky?!! A high explosive bomb fell into a neighbour's garden and the only lives lost were the goldfish in a pool. Some damage was done to surrounding houses but not a lot. They are still standing today and being lived in.

One of my most vivid memories was when we were in our air-raid shelter and the planes were drone, drone, droning overhead - where were they going? They were not dropping their bombs in our area. My sister suggested Coventry. When the all clear sounded and we surfaced we could see a red glow across the sky in the direction of Coventry. Oh dear! We hoped the cathedral was not bombed. We learnt the next day that the centre of Coventry, including the cathedral had gone up in flames. Worse was the number of lives lost.

The loss of life was far worse than the loss of buildings even if they were cathedrals. Strangely the cross on the altar table of Coventry cathedral was still there, burnt and crooked but still a cross. I think Coventry still has that cross. It seemed to stand there as a symbol of something. I could go on but I won't.

A friend of mine and her mother lived with her mother's older sister. They had a small haberdashery shop in Small Heath, opposite the tram depot which had an air-raid shelter which they used when necessary. One night my 21 year old friend and her mother came out of the shelter to go to the cloak-room, at that moment a high explosive bomb hit the building. Eileen was killed outright and her mother died a few days later. All they had to identify my friend by was some of her light brown hair.

After the raid the shop was not safe to live in so in that moment the Aunt who survived, lost her family, her home and
Wartime Memories (cont’d)

her livelihood. She was a member at the Methodist Central Hall and together with some other people went to live in the basement there. The Minister, The Rev. Noel Hutchcroft was a marvellous support to all these people and took her around to all the many people she had to see to settle her affairs, helping her through a very traumatic period. After a time she came and lived with us but eventually she left Birmingham to live with some other friends of hers.

These recollections are mainly about the bombing of Britain but that is what I experienced. We did not hear a great deal about the actual war. There was no television, that came after the war. The radio - yes, but a great deal of what went on in France and the continent was not broadcast until later. We heard of the awful casualties, but of the actual fighting not a great deal. The only other news we had was newspaper reports, which were not always reliable. We wondered how the prisoners of war were being treated but it was when they returned home that those atrocities were revealed. Although we did hear about some of the tortures suffered by prisoners in Japanese hands.

Rationing was the other difficulty we had to contend with. We were allowed a few ounces of butter and about a pound of meat each per week. Clothes were also rationed. Our ration books were amongst our most important possessions. We once had a competition at church to see who could make the best garment out of another one. Like an outfit for little Johnny out of a pair of Daddy's trousers, or a blouse out of an evening skirt etc. - we had to have some light entertainment.

As the war progressed the bombing ceased and we came up to D-Day. Was this the beginning of the end? We did not realise how many lives had been lost until a later date. After other battles and catastrophes V.E. Day arrived - what rejoicing. Teas in the streets for the children, dancing for older people - one thing about the war was that it brought people together; but should we be rejoicing? The war was still on in Japan. Then the atom bomb, what a catastrophe, the worst of the lot. A shock to us all and another

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Do you have a local reminiscence such as this or any other contribution for the newsletter? Contact the editor on 0121 608 3381 or email newsletter@bnta.org.uk

Deadline for the next edition is 1st August 2006.
Meetings

Thank you for your support at the meetings during the Autumn - Spring season. Changes to times and venues at the Northfield venue were out of our control and we now look forward to meeting back at Northfield Library in October 2006. We will however have a brand new venue for our Evening Meetings - The Quaker Meeting House in Cotteridge - opposite Woolworths on Watford Road. This has the advantage of a larger car park, and being closer to a number of bus stops serving more destinations. Please note that the meetings will no longer be on the 1st Monday of the month but will move to a new regular spot to the 4th Monday in the month starting in September.

Thank you also to the members who acted as Stewards for the Barber Lecture Series and those who have made the tea and coffee at Bournville. If you have any suggestions for speakers, please let me have Name, Tel Number, Subject and Fee (if possible) in writing by the end of April. Mary Parker

Meeting Reports

We had a packed house for our 2005 Christmas Social, held at the Bournville Friends Meeting House, on Monday 5th December. The excellent entertainment was provided by the duo “No Strings” - Peter (clarinet) and Michael (accordion). Their wide repertoire included the 'Radetzky March' (Strauss) and the 'Fantasia on British Sea Songs' (Henry Wood).

A buffet was provided after the interval (with the help of 'BNTA Ladies') - much enjoyed. Thanks to Joan and her helpers. We look forward to next year's Christmas Social!

On 22 October 2005 we held a 'Trafalgar Lunch' in the Trophy Room at the Edgbaston Tally Ho Social Club. This was our contribution to the national commemoration of Lord Nelson's victory in 1805. It was a new venue for our Anniversary Lunch and was generally much appreciated.

Our Guest Speaker was Dr. Lawrence Coates from the Engineering Department of the University of Birmingham. He gave an illustrated talk on the underlying nature of wave patterns in our coastal waters. This gave some explanation of the effect that the sea has on shaping and re-shaping of our coastline. This nicely contributed to our overall interest in the SeaBritain 2005 year-long events. A very pleasant occasion - with many thanks to Joan and her helpers.

Dr Coates with our Secretary and Chairman.
Reports and photos by Don Fripp
These 5 pictures relate to BNTA events in the past year. 4 of them were taken on outings last summer. Can you identify what they are and where they were taken? Even if you did not go on the outings, there may be just enough (possibly in the background) to tie them to the right outing. The remaining item featured briefly in the previous issue of the Newsletter - what is it (not the clock!), where is it, and how was BNTA involved?

Please drop a note with your membership number and answers to:

BNTA Photo Quiz,

22 Weoley Hill, Selly Oak,

Birmingham B29 4AD.

Alternatively you may phone 244 0837, and be prepared to dictate your membership number and answers to a 1571 voice mail. All fully correct replies will be entered into a ballot (to be drawn at the Summer Garden Party on
PHOTO QUIZ

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Issue 29  Spring 2006
Holiday 2006 - East Anglia

Monday 21st to Friday 25th August

Over thirty people are looking forward to this year's holiday in East Anglia. We hope a few more members will decide to join us. We will stay at "The Smoke House", a Best Western hotel; just outside Mildenhall in Suffolk. We will have coach outings every day to National Trust properties. As most National Trust properties open at lunch time we will have short visits to other places of interest on the Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

Monday - We will stop at Houghton for coffee where there is a choice of the pub or the NT tea room at the mill. We will stop long enough for a brief walk along the river bank to the lock. Then lunch and an afternoon visit at Wimpole Hall before going on to our hotel.

Tuesday - In the morning we will visit Thetford, a pleasant small town at the junction of the rivers Thet and Little Ouse. It was once the sixth largest town in England. More recently Thetford was the filming base for Dads Army. One of the town's five trails features places used in the series. In the Stone Age, flints were mined nearby. They were partly shaped for use as tools and supplied to a wide area of England. The mines are now in the care of English Heritage and are thought by some to date back to 3000BC. Some of our more intrepid members will visit the mines and climb down ladders into the mine while the rest explore Thetford. After we meet up we go to Oxburgh Hall for lunch and an afternoon visit.

Wednesday - We will travel almost to Cromer on the north coast and have visits to Blickling Hall and Felbrigg Hall. The coach will zip back and forth so that members can spend most of their time at one site or some time at each.

Thursday - Boadicea queen of the Iceni, came from this area and led the Boudiccan rebellion of 60/61AD. We won't see her, but we can visit a reconstructed Anglo Saxon Village between Mildenhall and Bury St Edmunds. Some members will choose to visit Bury St Edmunds or Lavenham Guildhall instead. In the afternoon we will all visit Melford Hall.

Friday - Our last day, we will drop some people at Wicken Fen, the Trust's first property, on our way to visit Anglesey Abbey. We will collect people from Wicken Fen at lunchtime and take them to Anglesey in time for a very quick visit before our trip back to Birmingham. We hope to get back to Birmingham around 5.30 to 6.00pm.
Our AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Association will take place at 2.30pm on Saturday 8th April 2006, at Selly Oak Methodist Church Hall, Langley’s Road, Birmingham. **(Please do not arrive before 2pm as the Hall will be in use)**

AGENDA

1. Welcome and opening remarks from the Chair
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held on 9th April 2005
4. Matters arising from the last AGM
5. Report of the Chairman and Committee
6. Treasurer’s report and approval of Annual Accounts
7. Motion 1 - That the requirement in clause G4 of the Constitution limiting the eligibility for re-election to the Committee be relaxed in the case of Mary Parker for the elections being held at this AGM.
   Motion 2 - That the requirement in clause G4 of the Constitution limiting the eligibility for re-election to the Committee be relaxed in the case of Muriel Reay for the elections being held at this AGM.
   Proposed by: Graham McCauley
   Seconded by: Audrey Randall
   On behalf of the signatories:
   Grace Darby, David Calver, John Surtees, Andrew Atton, Norma Bark, Don Fripp, Phil Mayhew, Christine McCauley, Maureen Hill, Brian Pratt, Joan Stoker.
8. Election of the Officers and members of the Committee. (Nominations must be sent to the Secretary to arrive at least fourteen days before the AGM, using the enclosed slip, and must have the consent of the nominees)
9. Appointment of the Independent Examiner
10. BNATA donations to the Trust from 2005
11. Any Other Business
12. Special Guest Speaker.
   ‘Bob’ Rouf - new Regional Community and Volunteering Officer for the West Midlands Region.
   13. Tea (see enclosed slip to order afternoon tea) & BNATA Website display

Will anyone wishing to tender their apologies for this meeting please contact Audrey Randall on 0121 783 3774

Note on the ‘relaxation’ resolutions at the AGM

Clause G4 of our Constitution stipulates that an Officer or Committee member is only eligible for election for a total of five successive annual terms unless “a motion to relax this requirement in a particular case, signed by at least ten Association members, has been circulated as part of the agenda and approved by the AGM”. Such a stipulation is incorporated in the model Constitution provided by the National Trust’s Liaison Office for Centres and Associations. In discussion with the Liaison Officer prior to our adoption of the Constitution it was noted that most of our existing Committee had already served for more than five successive years. So a transitional arrangement was agreed under which the limitation would come into force for each individual at a date to be determined by the Committee. A provisional list of these dates was drawn up for the Committee meeting held on 21st September 2004.

Final decisions were reached at the meeting held on 13th February 2006. The Committee wishes to relax the requirement in the case of two members who are due to take a "sabbatical" at the coming AGM. Formal resolutions to this effect are included in the agenda, and have been signed by the remaining members of the current Committee.
It’s not all work!

We may meet 10 times a year as a main committee for the Association and a few more times on sub-working groups, but that is not the whole story. Revolving around the periphery of the BNTA committee is a network of small social activities, sometimes involving the whole committee, sometimes involving one or two members sharing common interests.

In the first two months of 2006 we all had the opportunity to participate in Mary Parker’s lunch together with members of the Association. In February the committee, at their own expense, went out together for an informal evening meal at a local restaurant to mark the coming to an end of the current BNTA year. But it is the more informal side, the ad-hoc comment that ends in a small group participating in an activity they may not have otherwise been part of, that really makes the team gel. For example a group of Committee and Association members formed a team of six to enter a local church quiz night in February (they had the cheek to call the team "David’s Harem"). In the past I’ve been to birthday parties, had meals out in a small group, been to the theatre, to concerts, and attended the Happiness lecture at Birmingham University, all as a result of networking within and around the committee.

So you see being a committee member is not just a working forum discussing serious business, it can also be a catalyst for other things to do, both inside and outside the Association. Why not give it

Recommendations of Committee for 2005 donations

We agreed to spread the £4,300 available over 8 projects as follows:

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<th>Location</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<td>Sculptures</td>
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<td>Rosedene</td>
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<td>Hanbury</td>
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<td>Poets Border</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wightwick</td>
<td>World War 2 Air Raid Shelter</td>
<td>£250</td>
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