BIRMINGHAM
National Trust
Association

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

Newsletter

Issue 30  Autumn 2006

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** STOP PRESS **
A few seats are left on coach outing to Chester & Erdigg on 9th September.
Phone Maureen on 0121 475 7933

Best wishes to Greta Lacey recovering in Selly Oak Hospital

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Chairman’s Report

Programmed Events
At the AGM on 8th April 2006, I was able to report that over the past year we had continued to enjoy a full programme of lectures, outings and social events, and called on the meeting to convey our thanks to the various organisers of these events. Since then we have had the majority of this year's programme of outings, four by coach and three by car. We have also had our main summer social event - a Garden Party which features in a separate report.

Donations to Regional Projects from our 2005 surplus.
The Committee recommendations for the £4,300 we had available were reported in our last Newsletter, and agreed at the AGM. Since then, it has emerged that one of the projects, for educational resources at Rosedene, was being covered by an alternative donation. So we had £500 to re-allocate. The Committee decided that this money should be used instead for facilities for the handicapped at Carding Mill Valley.
I like to include a picture or two to remind us what our donations are helping to fund. This year we gave £500 towards repair of the wood sculptures at Brockhampton, and maintenance of the tracks to them. These sculptures were first put up in 1995 to celebrate the National Trust's Centenary.

The photos, courtesy of Les Rogers, show Harold the Horse having a drink.
Committee Retirements and Sabbaticals
There are three members of last year's Committee who are not serving on the main Committee this current year - David Calver, Andrew Atton and Philip Mayhew.

David has served the Committee in many capacities over the years and has stood down for a while. Over the past two years he has been Vice-Chairman and has chaired our Publicity Sub-Committee. For longer than that he has produced the designs for our various leaflets and the tickets for specific events. He continues to be available in an advisory capacity to the Sub-Committee.

Andrew has served on the main Committee for as long as records can detect and is taking a well earned sabbatical. He has been absolutely invaluable as editor of the Newsletter, and continues in that role. The high quality of our Newsletter is largely due to his tireless effort and expertise.

Philip is taking a break from the main Committee after a considerable period of service. He has sat at the receipt of entry fees at innumerable lectures and ensured that National Trust posters and literature have been circulated.

The Association owes all three of them a considerable debt of gratitude for their various services over the years.

Presidency
At its meeting on 22 May the Committee confirmed the re-

appointment of Grace Darby as our President. Grace has been our President since she succeeded Michael Cadbury in that role in 1999. Before that she served the present Birmingham Association, and also its predecessor - the Midland Centre, in many capacities. She is now keen to reduce her commitments, and so we are looking for a new President to succeed her next summer. The post is filled at the invitation of the elected Committee. If any members have suggestions of people whom they would wish to see considered for the post, please contact the Chairman or Secretary.

Graham McCauley

Christmas Social

Monday 18th December 2006
Friends Meeting House, Cotteridge
at 7.30 pm

This year's entertainment will be: “The Golden Age of Variety”

Music, colourful costumes, Fun! Followed by a Buffet Supper.

This year we will enjoy a ‘Finger Buffet’ All kinds of savouries then dessert, tea, coffee etc.

Total cost for entertainment and meal is £9.

Please send in your application form using the enclosed slip.

Joan Stoker
Old Brum Series

December 1945 saw our family return from five years of evacuation in Bewdley - to live in an ex-army house on the outskirts of the Pheasey Estate (almost in sight of Barr Beacon). It all seemed strange to a seven year-old boy.

1946 was the year of the ‘power cuts and candlelights’ - trying to keep warm on our coal ration. School was in a temporary hut with coke stoves and primitive toilets. The highlight came just before Christmas when we were moved into a brick-built school based on the old Pheasey Community Centre.

Early 1947 saw the ‘six-week snowstorm’ - more power cuts and the milkman delivered the milk on a horse and sleigh. Just as the snow cleared, I spent three and a half weeks in the old Birmingham Eye Hospital (Lionel Street) to have major eye-surgery. Apparently, I looked so awful when I came out of hospital - that my mother took me to the Manor Guest House, in Bewdley, for convalescence!

Don: 1946 to 1948

Car Outings Note from Brian

After 10 years in the job, I am taking (at least) one year off from organising car outings. So far, nobody has volunteered to take over for 2007. It is not a difficult job or particularly time consuming. Essential requirements are a car, the ability to communicate with people in a friendly and businesslike way and an eye for detail. The job entails: By the end of October, select places to visit with a few alternatives (it doesn't have to be houses or to follow my pattern). Contact the property (usually the owner) to enquire if a visit would be acceptable, suggesting dates and enquiring the cost including refreshments, if any. Write to confirm the booking. Draft a circular to go to members in the spring mailing. Check applications and pass cheques to the Treasurer. Before the visit, do a reconnaissance to note the route, timing, any hazards and suitable places for lunch—it can make an enjoyable day out for the organiser. Prepare and post a set of notes for those who have applied to go on the outing. If the visit is a privilege visit (i.e. not open to the public), write a 'thank you' letter.

That's it. I am prepared to help with suggestions, advice, typing, use of computer and, if invited, going on the reconnaissance. Any offers, ‘phone 0121 454 7248.
**Invitation from Sutton**

A week of celebrations is being held at the Town Hall in Sutton Coldfield from 17th to 24th September 2006 to mark the one hundredth anniversary of the opening of the building. In commemoration, the Sutton Coldfield Centre is holding an afternoon of talks, slides and films about Sutton Coldfield and its park. The event is entitled: "**AFTERNOON TEA WITH THE NATIONAL TRUST**" and is to be held at the Town Hall on Thursday 21 September starting at 2pm and ending about 4.30pm; admission is free. On this occasion the Town Hall will provide all those attending with a cup of tea.

The draft programme is:

- Lecture on ‘Everyday life in 1906’ by Cedric Parcell
- Lecture on Sutton Park by the Park Manager, John Porter
- Break for refreshments
- Slideshow showing photos of old Sutton Coldfield. Presented by Marion Baxter
- If time permits, extracts from a film about the history of Sutton Coldfield.

Each of the presentations will be of about 30 minutes duration. There is also a separate free talk in the evening. Our members have been warmly invited to this interesting event, and anyone who attends is requested to make themselves known to the Chairman, Ruth Dineley, or any other member of their Committee.

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**Supplementary Fund Raising**

Our Holidays trips, both last year and this year, have been organised by Christine McCauley under the auspices of the Woodlands Travel Club who deal with all of the business and legal complexities on our behalf. We receive half of the profits, which are ultimately donated to local NT projects.

Any BNTA members who participate in the Travel Club's own outings, in this country or abroad, may nominate BNTA as the beneficiary for a share of the profits arising from the outing. Many members already have other favourite Charities which they nominate in this manner. But if you do not have such, you may wish to consider BNTA in this respect. Just write "BNTA" on the back of your cheque.

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**Barber Lectures**

We have again been asked to provide stewards for the Barber Institute lectures this Autumn. The dates are all on Tuesdays - 24th October, 7th November, 21st November and 5th December.

If you would like to offer your services, and can be at the Barber Institute by 5.30pm on the day, please complete the relevant slip and return it to me as soon as possible.

Mary Parker
Photo Quiz

There were no entries for this competition, so the prize of £20 stays in our coffer for future donation. For those who still have the Spring Newsletter to hand, here are the identities of the five pictures:

A: Fabulously colourful piece of plasterwork above the fireplace in the main hall at Plas Mawr, Conwy; taken on the coach trip on 11th June 2005.

B: the Dalek-like object is the badge maker that we donated to the activity room at Greyfriars in Worcester last year - as reported on the back page of last Autumn's Newsletter.

C: the Three Bridges that span the River Conwy, just below the Castle; they are the present road bridge, Telford's suspension bridge of 1826, and Stephenson's tubular railway bridge of 1849; also taken on the coach trip on 11th June.

D: "The oldest car in Britain", stored at the Science Museum's repository at Wroughton; taken on the car outing on 4th June (as were two other pictures in last Autumn's Newsletter).

E: a sun dial in the garden at Polesden Lacey - taken on a visit there during last August's BNTA Holiday based at Guildford.

Anniversary Lunch

Saturday, 14th October 2006
Tally Ho Social Club, Pershore Road. Edgbaston. Speaker: Chris Upton

There are still a few places left. This is something you won't want to miss - so please send in your application straight away.

Application forms with menu choice etc. were sent with Spring Newsletter If you have mislaid yours, please contact Joan Stoker on 0121 459 6280
Mary Stallwood

It is with great regret that we record the death of Mary Stallwood in June 2006. Mary was a very special lady. She was well known in Sandwell Valley for her work with wildlife and as can be seen here, led many of our rambles.

BNTA Ramble at Saltwoods, Saturday 27th May 2006, led by Mary Stallwood

The group arriving at Cradley Heath Station ...

... and admiring a babbling brook
When war was declared in Sept 1939, I had just had the results of my Higher School Certificate exams. I was to have done a third year in the sixth, to take Oxford entrance, but KE Girls were now to be evacuated to Cheltenham and my parents, fearful of a possible invasion, were loathe to part with their darling daughter, so instead I went to Birmingham to read languages. No UCCA forms in those days! I walked into the Registrar’s office in the old Mason College in Edmund Street, told him my grades and I was in!

We had two homes at that time: in the week we lived over my mother’s dress shop in Cannon Hill, but our weekends were spent in the country at the house my parents had built; four miles upstream from Worcester, in a tiny hamlet called Hawford (near the NT Dovecote). When bombing started one or other would have been commandeered, so we let the flat over the shop and moved to Hawford, resigning ourselves to travelling by train (the petrol ration just got us to Droitwich station), but able to sleep in our beds. Train journeys were tedious, though surprisingly reliable, as in the dark months only one small blue light was allowed in each compartment, so reading was impossible. Car headlights too, were largely obscured and we had six miles of twisty country lanes, but we were thankful for the peace. By 1940 when bombing started in earnest, we could sometimes see the glow in the sky even from Hawford, and sometimes walking from Snow Hill station to Edmund Street next morning I was paddling through broken glass.

The Edmund Street building was a sombre one at best, the ground floor was lofty, vaulted and gloomy, though the upper floors were light enough. Fuel was severely rationed and heat a luxury. French was on the first floor and tolerably warm, but German on the top floor got virtually no heat, so we worked in our overcoats in Winter and still froze. Italian on the other hand was such a small department (just the Prof!) it was located in an annexe next to the Vice-Chancellor’s office, and had no central heating pipes, so they were allowed the luxury of good coal fires. This meant that there was one hour each day when just five of us shared the Prof’s fire and toasted our cold toes. I must, over a three-year course have had some lectures in warm sunshine, but I only remember the cold, with refec and the common room as oases of comfort and jollity.

The worst part was daytime raids, though mercifully they were not too frequent. We had to take shelter in the sub-basement, two floors below street level, and squeeze in between the
stacks of books stored down there. Little doors had been made (about 2 foot square) to serve as escape routes, but they only connected with other buildings and inspired in me no confidence whatsoever. I'd have preferred to take my chance on the top floor rather than fear entombment.

This all sounds pretty grim, but we were young and resilient and there was plenty of fun, though for most social activities we travelled by train to the Edgbaston campus. I had dear friends very willing to put me up for the night and after a Saturday night 'hop' at the Union I would walk to their house, feeling safer than I do nowadays. After I got my degree I stayed on as staff for two years and instead of fire duty, I did one night a week in the sub-basement helping to man the central control for the Home Guard. But once we'd contacted all the units (and no-one ever had any incident to report) we could snatch a few hours sleep, warmer and more comfortable than the fire-watchers on the roof.

Had I gone to Oxford I wouldn't have

Mary Parker’s Annual Lunch

My Annual Lunch will be held on Saturday, 6th January 2007 (Twelfth Night!) between 12 noon and 2.00pm. The cost is £4.00 each and places are limited to 30, so booking is essential. Home-made cake and marmalade will be on sale, plus a raffle. Please book via the reply slip with a cheque payable to M. Parker. Tickets will not be distributed until December.

Autumn/Winter Talks

Welcome to the 2006/07 Autumn/Winter programme. I hope that you will find plenty to interest you. We have two changes of venue this year. (1) Monday evening meetings will be on the 4th Monday in the month at The Friends Meeting House, Watford Road, Cotteridge. (NB December meeting date!) (2) from January 2007, our Tuesday morning meetings will be held at the Baptist Church, Bristol Road South, Northfield. There has been a complete refurbishment since we last met there in April and we will be using a room on the first floor (23 steps or use the lift). The Coffee Bar has been moved so we will get to our room through this amenity. There should also be a restaurant available for lunch afterwards.

You will notice that the last meeting at Carrs Lane is in February; the March meeting will be an excursion, as Julia Kirby has invited us to visit the Museum Collection Centre on 22nd March. We are limited to 30 and there will be a charge of £3.50 each. The centre is close to Duddeston Station on the Cross City Line. Please book via the reply slip, enclosing an SAE for final instructions.

Mary Parker
Our Garden Party - 28 June 2006

We are most grateful to two of our members, Molly Archer and Jean Powell, who allowed us to use their delightful garden in Selly Oak for this splendid event, and who supplemented the efforts of our own catering and fund raising teams - despite protestations that they would just "sit back and enjoy the occasion".

As well as the opportunity to look around this very colourful and enchanting garden there were plenty of places to sit and soak up the atmosphere whilst enjoying a lovely afternoon tea. There were over 50 guests and the teas were organised by Joan Stoker and her helpers. The usual raffle and other stalls were in evidence.

The event was decidedly oversubscribed, so for those of you who were unable to attend, we include a couple of pictures to capture something of the flavour. There are a few more pictures (in colour) on our Website, www.bnta.org.uk, where you can also find reports and pictures from some of our outings. If you have any pictures taken at recent BNTA events that you would be willing to have displayed on our Website, please contact Don Fripp as webmaster@bnta.org.uk.

Our Treasurer, John Surtees, reports that the event surplus is over £250
Local Volunteering

From Bob Rouf: National Trust Regional Community and Volunteering Officer

Get More Out than You Put In

The National Trust was founded by three volunteers in 1895 and volunteers have always been at the heart of our work. A recent census found that we have 2500 regular volunteers in the West Midlands and last year we gave out over 120 awards for 10 years volunteering. People don’t just stay for the awards though, our volunteers stay with us because we give them as much if not more than they put in. They keep active, meet people, make friends, learn skills and pass on their fondness for our places. In the West Midlands we are currently looking for people to give their time in the following areas:

Volunteer Guides / Room Stewards
- Spend time in beautiful and friendly surroundings
- Meet new people & share your enthusiasm

Conservation and Housekeeping Assistants
- Help recreate the atmosphere and the history of the Back to Back houses by retaining the feeling that the homes are 'lived in'. Tasks include winding clocks, lighting fires and bed-making
- Help would also be appreciated with general maintenance, mending of objects and updating displays to keep them fresh

Learning Volunteers
- Help bring out the stories behind the history
- Be involved in a wide variety of activities from school visits to festive events.

In return for your gift of time we promise to give you an enjoyable, productive and rewarding experience.

Please contact Julie Lynch on 0121 753 7752 or email julie.lynch@nationaltrust.org.uk

(with some minor amounts still outstanding). This money will be included in the total amount donated to specific National Trust Association Projects at the end of 2006.

Our thanks to Joan Stoker and her
Visit to Bodnant Garden - 10th June 2006

The route our coach took to Bodnant was planned so that we avoided the motorway and travelled through countryside, which was interesting and at times colourful with blossom, particularly rhododendrons and poppies. We stopped for coffee at a country pub where, in the car park we were surprised to find stalls selling fresh fruit, vegetables and flowers. The day was already hot but the driver opened up the refrigerator on the coach for strawberries and other delicacies.

We reached Bodnant at midday and decided to have lunch before going into the garden. Some people had brought a picnic, others chose to use the restaurant. The first thing we did on entering the garden was to see the Laburnum Arch. It was at its best with the sun shining down through the golden racemes and a delicate perfume everywhere.

By now the temperature had risen considerably. We took advantage of the shade provided by large native trees and walked the perimeter, visiting the wild, natural parts such as The Mill, The Waterfall and The Dell, and then the more formal terraced gardens, the Lily Pond and finally The Rose Terrace. It was a clear day and so the Snowdon Range made an impressive backdrop to the garden, which was spread below us.

Running out of time and energy we just managed a second visit to the Arch, a visit to the plant sales and

Thanks to Graham for photographs