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 33  Spring 2008

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Holiday 2007
Sitting  Pretty
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** STOP PRESS **

Seats are still available on some coach outings. See Page 8 and then Phone Maureen on 0121 475 7933

Extra day for Assay Office visits booked. See Page 7

Edited by Andrew Alton
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From the Chairman

Over the past year we have continued to enjoy a full programme of talks, outings and social events. Members will wish to join me in thanking all those who have helped to organize these. Elsewhere in this issue you will find reports on all these activities. You will also find enclosures with this mailing giving details of this year’s Anniversary Lunch in October, and of our June Garden Party to be held at the home of Joyce and John Briggs. We thank them most warmly for agreeing to host this event again this year.

As ever, Mary Parker gave us a wide selection of some sixteen talks during the past year, with topics ranging from accounts of exotic trips to Peru and India, to reminiscences of recent local history – the Pearl Workers of Birmingham, and the Founding of Handsworth Park. In addition to organising the three series of talks, and several fund raising events, Mary has now taken over responsibility for our programme of Social Events with the imminent retirement from the Committee of Joan Stoker.

Maureen Hill now organises both our programme of rambles and our thriving series of coach trips which she ran this year following many years of service in that role from Muriel Reay.

Unfortunately, with Brian Pratt’s retirement from the Committee last year, we have lost his invaluable knowledge and skill in organising car outings. So last summer’s three outings look like being our last for some time to come. However Christine McCauley continues to serve up a varied diet of visits over the five days of the BNTA holiday in August which she revived in 2005. After three years in a row the holiday is now an eagerly awaited annual event.

All this hard work, and your enthusiastic support, have generated a surplus in the past year of £6,300 which we will be donating to local National Trust projects. For the third year in a row the sum we have available has risen by about £1,000. For reasons which our Treasurer can explain on request at our AGM we have already paid over the extra £1,000 to a project at Baddesley Clinton. You will find the Committee recommendations for the remaining £5,300 on the back page of this Newsletter.

In January I was invited, along with two other members of our Committee, to the special 21st Anniversary AGM of one of our neighbouring Associations, namely at Rugby. The RNTA Committee is hoping to foster stronger
fraternal relations amongst local Associations. The fact that two of us came away with prizes in their raffle was a purely fortuitous inducement in this direction!

I will not be standing again this year for the post of Chairman – or indeed for the Committee. This is in accord with the policy of the Trust’s Supporter Group Liaison Office, who have a strong guiding hand in the Constitution of Centres and Associations such as ourselves. (Indeed item 6 on our Agenda shows just how strong this guidance can be.) Under the revised Constitution that we adopted three years ago, there is a normal upper limit of five successive years’ service for all Officers and Committee Members.

We can only go beyond that limit by first passing a specific AGM motion to waive this clause in order to allow an individual to stand again for election. We will have such a resolution this year (see item 11 on our Agenda) pertaining to four members of the present Committee. For a variety of reasons I chose not to invoke this on my own behalf.

Over my four years as Chairman, I have been seriously disappointed at our inability to develop any strength in depth for running the majority of our activities. I had hoped that either by setting up small subcommittees, or by calling for members to “shadow” those who were on the verge of retiring from their chosen chores, we could avoid overloading the diminishing band of hard workers who have done so much for us over the years. Unless new candidates for the Committee are forthcoming by this year’s AGM we can expect that at least four members of the Committee will have taken on significant additional chores during a twelve month period.

Although I have decided not to stand for the Committee this coming year, I have already indicated in writing to the present Committee that I shall still be available to help with some of the chores that do not really require a person to be a member of the Committee, provided that is agreeable to those primarily responsible. But I shall be on a “sabbatical” from all more serious chores.

I wish the Association all good fortune, and my successor better luck than mine in fostering the necessary strength in depth to promote its long term survival.

Graham McCauley
BNTA Holiday 2007

Our hotel in Harrogate was located opposite the Royal Baths allowing evening strolls through the town and the Valley Gardens for those who didn’t want to spend all evening in the comfortable lounge “putting the world to rights”.

Our first afternoon was spent in York where everyone was free to choose which of its many attractions they visited before the short drive to our hotel in the late afternoon.

As usual we had quite a few choices available on the holiday. On the Wednesday morning some people visited RHS Harlow Carr, while some explored Harrogate. Others visited Brimham Rocks (NT); a popular beauty spot with fantastic Millstone Grit outcrops. We all met up at lunchtime to go to Beningbrough Hall (NT) for an afternoon visit.

Thursday had the most choices. Three people spent a whole day in York; a large group spent the day at Castle Howard. The rest went to Pickering and either caught a steam train to “Aidensfield” or, after a brief explore and some lunch, went on to Rievaulx Terrace and Temples (NT). At Rievaulx, carefully maintained gaps in the hillside trees let you get a very good view of Rievaulx Abbey (EH) below.

Friday saw a last minute change in our programme. In the morning a few went to Ripon but most of the group visited Ripley Castle and its surrounding estate owned village. The village was ready for Bank Holiday celebrations with many pig ‘scarecrows’; the theme coming from the boar that features in the arms of the
by Christine McCauley

Ingilby family who have lived in the castle for 700 years. Our afternoon visit was to Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal Water Gardens; a World Heritage site with mixed NT and EH ownership.

Hardwick Hall, with its fantastic windows made an impressive end to our holiday on the way home. The ‘Old Hall’ which is owned by the National Trust but managed by English Heritage is not much older than the ‘new’ hall; it is now a ruin with some fine plasterwork still remaining.

This year’s holiday in Torquay is based at the Palace hotel which has large grounds with many facilities. The Palace is also on a main bus route so it will be easy to take advantage of our new bus passes to explore independently. It has the usual pattern of a National Trust property each day but with non NT choices available. I hope the weather will be as kind to us as it was in Harrogate last August. We still have a few places available. Contact Christine McCauley at the usual membership address or on 0121 244 0837.

*Photographs taken by Bob Harris and Graham McCauley.*
Visit to Harlow Carr Gardens (RHS)

We all enjoyed our visit to these beautiful gardens despite a cool northerly wind. Colourful herbaceous borders, either side of the path lead past the kitchen gardens to the seven "Gardens Through Time". Each themed garden from Regency, through Victorian to ultra contemporary show changing garden fashions. The pathways lead past Queen Mother's lake to the other areas via a streamside walk. In another part was an interesting herb garden, alpine houses, ornamental grass borders leading to an attractive foliage garden with a summer house, into a scented garden with willow arbour where one could sit and enjoy the different perfumes. There are dramatic long main borders of mixed perennials, grasses and shrubs and an extensive woodland area and arboretum with wild flower meadows. The visitor centre, a useful garden shop and a study centre complete the this snapshot of RHS Harlow Carr.  

Fay Harris

Dingbats Quiz

The answers to the prize quiz set at the Anniversary Lunch are as follows:

1. Clean underwear
2. A side salad
3. What goes up must come down
4. Clerical error
5. Backward glance
6. Watership Down
7. Within reason
8. Blue movie or out of the blue
9. Frank Sinatra
10. The good, the bad and the ugly

11. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush
12. Jack in the box
13. Put on weight
14. Leftovers
15. Mother-in-law or Police woman
16. Long time no see
17. Three blind mice
18. Gross injustice
19. See-through blouse
20. No peace for the wicked

Congratulations to Diana Jinks, the only entry to have all the answers correct.
Where our Donation money went

Here is a note received recently from Laura Alden - (Editor)

Hi Andrew, I’ve just been speaking with Audrey Randall, to let her know that we have now purchased the new furniture for the volunteer room here at the Back to Backs, with the very kind donation made by BNTA. I have taken a picture of one of our volunteers seated in one of the new armchairs, and wondered if you would like to use it in the next newsletter to let your members see how their donation money has been spent?

The volunteer is Margaret, and she is one of our volunteer tour guides. Along with the comfortable armchair that Margaret is enjoying, we also bought a new 2 seater sofa, a coffee table, small dining table and chairs, a bookcase, and a stool. The volunteers are really happy with the new furniture, and on behalf of everyone at the Back to Backs, thank you very much!

Laura Alden
House and Visitor Services Manager
Birmingham Back to Backs

Visit to Assay Office

This visit has proved so popular that another day has been arranged - Tuesday 20th May. The morning is already fully booked but if you would like to go in the afternoon (2.30pm), please send me a stamped addressed envelope and cheque payable to BNTA for £5 per person.

We have to guarantee 20 people and 16 places are still available. If there are vacancies at the AGM on 19th April, the visit will be thrown open to non-members. Please respond to Mary Parker,
1 Hunstanton Avenue, B17 8SX.

Mary Parker

Your snaps at the AGM

If you have photographs taken at any BNTA event during the past year, we invite you to bring them along to the AGM and we will add them to our display boards. The committee will provide mounting paper and title strips etc - all we need is your handiwork!
Have You Booked For This Year's Coach Visits?

Bookings have been coming in quite quickly since information was sent out in January. So far, the visit to Newark & Southwell on 14th June is full with a waiting list.

At the time of writing there are limited seats on the other visits, with the exception of Alrewas Arboretum with 25 available.

On the visit to the National Memorial Arboretum & Lichfield on Saturday 27th September, we will be arriving in time to be in the Chapel at 11.00 a.m. when the daily silence is observed every day of the year.

At 11 o'clock every day a light shines on the altar from the bearing and elevation of the sun at 11.00 am on the 11th November, Armistice Day. The silence is preceded by an introduction by the BBC newsreader Peter Donaldson, and Last Post and Reveille was recorded by the band of the Royal Marines.

On the 15th August 2005, the 60th Anniversary of VJ Day, the Far East Prisoners of War Memorial Building was dedicated and officially opened by representatives of the three Armed Forces. There are many things to view in this building as well as the memorials outside. A shop and café are also available.

In the afternoon in Lichfield, there will be a short walk for those who wish.

Places of interest include the Cathedral, Dr Johnson's House and the Embroidery depicting the history of Staffordshire in the visitors centre.

Maureen Hill

Insurance – A Reminder

Boring, I know – but important!

The National Trust’s personal accident policy covers officers, committee members and members of Birmingham National Trust Association whilst undertaking voluntary work for the National Trust or the Association.

Cover applies only to those between 10 and 80 years of age, so if you are a 9 year old coach party leader or a 90 year old ramble party leader, please be aware that you have no personal accident cover (other than your own, if any) and take extra care accordingly. This age restriction does not apply to the National Trust’s public liability insurance, so if an Association member were injured due to the negligence of an officer, committee member or member of the Association, acting on behalf of the Association, they would be able to pursue a claim, irrespective of age.

John Surtees
Old Brum Series

Early to mid-1950’s – and there was ‘change-in-the-air’. Post-War Austerity was slipping away – sweets came off ration and other rationing slowly disappeared. Variety in clothing became more the ‘norm’. Although economic conditions and shortages would appear harsh by today’s standards – still, there was a sense that ‘things were getting better’. Housing was still very scarce – many couples getting married (usually in their early twenties, or even late teens) simply moved in with Mom and Dad – whilst waiting several years for a house to become available.

During this period I attended the George Dixon Grammar School, in City Road. Apart from studies – the main occupations seemed to be: - rugby, cycling and swimming. In this period, we were still enjoying the benefits of the 1944 Education Act – with a real sense of purpose in schooling and with some hope for the future. Sadly, Education began to change after this period (many believed it to be for the worse). It has taken over 40 years for our nation to realise the errors then made – and that we still need to work at improving our State Education System - such that we achieve genuine mobility in all parts of our Society.

Don Fripp

In memory of Gordon Laker

In our last issue we carried a Eulogy of Gordon Laker, who was a founding member of our Association, and for 17 years was a volunteer Room Steward at Packwood House. His wife Rae asked that the funds collected in Gordon's memory be given to BNTA. After consultation with both Rae, and the Property Manager at Packwood House, we have decided that these funds, amounting to £600, should be used for the purchase of five apple trees as part of the Special Collection of traditional local varieties in the orchard there.
Thank you from David Brown

David was thrilled with his retirement gift at our last AGM and wrote to express his thanks. Here is a transcription of his letter:

Dear Members of BNIA,

I was completely overwhelmed when I opened the card you so kindly gave me. To find such a generous present from you all at the Birmingham Association was a huge surprise.

I will buy something special with it, that is from you all. It was so kind of the members to do this for me and I cannot thank you all enough.

As always, it was a great pleasure to be your guest at your AGM and I was touched that the audience laughed in all the right places!! My relationship with you all has always been so enjoyable and fulfilling, and I thank you so much for the kindness and generosity shown to me over many years.

I really do appreciate your very generous gesture and I hope you will be aware of my feelings.

With all good wishes, Yours sincerely, David

Can’t get in to AGM?

Building work at Selly Oak Methodist Church means that direct access to the building from the rear Car Park will not be available at the Annual General Meeting. Members are asked to drop their passengers at the front entrance and then drive to the rear Car Park. Drivers can then walk round the building to front entrance. It is best to leave rear car park by the second exit and walk around building to the right. Please leave the limited parking on forecourt for disabled drivers.

The meeting will be in the Church Hall as usual. Hope to see you there.
Our AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Association will take place at 2.30pm on Saturday 19th April 2008, at Selly Oak Methodist Church Hall, Langley’s Road, Birmingham.

AGENDA
1. Welcome and opening remarks from the President, Chris Upton
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held on 21st April 2007
4. Matters arising from the last AGM
5. Annual Report of the Chairman and Committee
6. Amendment to Constitution to allow National Trust Volunteers to join the Association. This is a change to the section on Membership, being made under clause Q1(b) of our Constitution which empowers the National Trust to specify such an alteration. It came into effect on our receipt of the appropriate notification. However we are also requested by the Supporters Group Liaison Office to explain the change to members at our AGM.
7. Treasurer’s report and approval of Annual Accounts to 31st Dec. 2007
8. Appointment of Independent Examiner for 2008: Mr Edward Hall
9. Treasurer to announce that the Committee has decided to increase the door charge for talks from £1.50 to £2.00 from 1st September 2008.
10. BNTA donations to the Trust from 2007. (see table on back page)
11. Electoral motion proposed by Graham McCauley, seconded by John Surtees, with the support of nine additional signatories: - "that for the elections being held at this AGM the requirement in clause G4 of the Constitution limiting the eligibility for re-election to the Committee be relaxed in the case of the following Members of the present Committee: Don Fripp, Maureen Hill, Mary Parker and Audrey Randall".
12. Election of Officers and Members of the Committee for 2008/9. (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.)
13. Presentations to two retiring Committee members – Muriel Ray and Joan Stoker.
14. Anna Russell, NT Property Manager for the Birmingham Conurbation, will give an update for the West Midlands Region and receive (on behalf of the Trust) our cheque for the donations to be passed on to local properties.
15. Any Other Business
16. Our Guest Speaker this year is Caroline Hutton, manager of “Metamorphosis at Martineau Gardens”, who will speak on “Martineau Gardens – Past, Present and Future”
17. Tea (see enclosed slip to order tea) Will anyone wishing to tender their apologies for this meeting please contact Audrey Randall on 0121 783 3774 or at 87 Sandhurst Avenue, Hodge Hill, Birmingham B36 8EH
# Recommendations of Committee for 2007 donations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baddesley Clinton</td>
<td>New dress curtains in the Dining Room and Chapel at a cost of £4,000 as part of an ongoing project. We have already sent our donation towards this project directly to the property</td>
<td>£1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back to Back Houses</td>
<td>New costumes are required for events and tours at the property as part of the 'atmospheres' project</td>
<td>£500 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carding Mill Valley</td>
<td>To plant hawthorn on the sides of the gulley at the Long Mynd, replacing the old hawthorn hedges</td>
<td>£500 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlecote Park</td>
<td>About 2 years ago the Trust purchased 2 salvers portraying the Lucy coat of arms and commemorating a family wedding in the late 18th century. To date the salvers have not been on display due to security concerns. A donation of £1,000 would enable security measures to be put in place and allow visitors to view the salvers</td>
<td>£500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clent Hills</td>
<td>A small footbridge at Sling pool in Clent Hills was damaged during the storms in Summer 2007</td>
<td>£2,000 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanbury Hall</td>
<td>18th century style terracotta plant pots for the rear of the house &amp; Stableyard</td>
<td>£800 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wightwick Manor</td>
<td>Repairs are required to the De Morgan tiles on the fireplace in the Honeysuckle bedroom</td>
<td>£500 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Packwood House</td>
<td>A project to bring the Kitchen Garden back to life needs to reinstate all the path edging and surfaces.</td>
<td>£500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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* indicates that this donation would be for the full amount requested