



Try our website; especially the calendar page which shows all our events

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BIRMINGHAM National Trust Association



A voluntary Association of National Trust
Members and NT Volunteers founded
in 1991 to promote and prosper
the work of the National Trust

Newsletter

Issue 34 Autumn 2008

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**** STOP PRESS ****

A few seats are left
on coach outing to
Alrewas & Lichfield
on Saturday
27 September.

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Chairman's Letter

Dear Friends, May I thank you for electing me as your Chairman at our AGM in April 2008 - I hope that I prove worthy of the position and may our future together prove successful.

Our recent AGM had several highlights - I wish to mention two of them: - Joan Stoker and Muriel Reay both retired from our Committee after many years of loyal and faithful service - Joan in her work on 'Socials' and Muriel for her work on 'Coach Outings'. Both were given floral tributes. Our Guest Speaker this year was Caroline Hutton who gave an excellent talk on the 'Metamorphosis at Martineau Gardens' in Edgbaston. We have scheduled a BNTA visit to these Gardens on the 19th March 2009.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our Committee Members, and the many other helpers, for their hard work and dedication that helps our Association to function and be worthwhile. Teresa Spain is our new Minute Secretary. Graham McCauley had been our Chairman for the last four years and is now taking sabbatical leave. Once again, Joyce and John Briggs let us use their garden for this year's Garden Party - many thanks.

We have our usual busy programme for the coming Autumn and Winter period - with plans already in hand for up to a year ahead. These plans include a return of car outings in the Summer of 2009. Discussions are also taking place regarding future lectures at the Barber Institute - watch for news in

the coming Winter mailing. Please do tell your friends about BNTA - and encourage them to join our Association. New members are always welcome.

BNTA is doing very well in providing a good programme of educational and social events for our membership as well as raising money for National Trust Projects (the majority of these projects are in the West Midlands area). However, our Committee is relatively small in respect of the number and range of activities undertaken. We are in urgent need of more Committee Members - and other volunteers who help out with various events and enterprises. Unless more helpers come forward - it will get increasingly difficult to maintain, let alone enhance, our extensive Events programme. So - please, can you help? If so - contact me, or any Committee Member (see the 'Green Card' for telephone numbers; or use the Contacts Page on our Website; or simply speak to one of us at any Event). To maintain/increase our Membership - we need to nurture and develop our programmes - hence this plea for more assistance.

On a different note - I would like to say 'welcome' to our new category of Members - those folk who do voluntary work at local National Trust properties - nice to have you.

Finally - may we all enjoy our time together in BNTA as the months pass.

Sincerely, **Don Fripp**

News from Charlecote Park

This is the first article that I have written to you all since my appointment as Property Manager at Charlecote Park. The property has seen a number of staff changes over the past 4 to 5 years and my aim is to provide some much needed stability. This season has been somewhat disappointing with visitors down by around 6,000 on last year to date due mainly to the poor weather and of course the credit crunch!. I have very ambitious plans for Charlecote Park over the next 5 years or so and I will be sharing those plans with you all over the coming months. You can look forward to receiving regular updates on our progress and I look forward to meeting a number of you personally at some of your regular meetings.

The Park and Gardens will be open for 7 days a week from the start of the 2009 season. The Shop & Restaurant will also open every day of the week during the school holidays at Easter, Whitsun and Summer as well as at half term. For Conservation reasons the house will only be open for 5 days a week as usual. We hope that this extended opening pattern will allow visitors to enjoy the property and its beautiful landscape throughout all seasons of the year.

Having been employed by the National Trust for nearly 11 years I have had the very great pleasure of working with a number of Centres & Associations throughout the country. I have always been amazed by the work that you do on behalf of our properties and of the funds that are raised to support projects, many of which simply would not happen without your generosity and support. Can I therefore thank you on behalf of my property team and myself for the support

that you have given to Charlecote Park over the years which is very much appreciated.

Charlecote Park remains open to visitors until Sunday 2nd November while the Shop and Restaurant will also remain open throughout November and until 21st December at weekends. The great hall will also be decorated for Christmas and is open at weekends from 6th to 21st December. I do hope that you will be able to visit Charlecote Park and enjoy the Autumn and Winter season with us. There are a number of special events lined up to celebrate this lovely time of the year with highlights including:

Hidden Charlecote (16th September & 13th October) providing a behind the scenes walk through the property's past exploring parts of the house not normally accessible to the public (telephone 01789 420277 to book).

A Victorian Weekend (6th & 7th December) Soak up the atmosphere of a traditional Victorian Christmas. Listen to singers, join in the celebrations in the house and grounds, and make Christmas cards and decorations.

An Elizabethan Weekend (13th & 14th December) Come and see our Elizabethan splendour and prepare for the crowning of Queen Elizabeth 1 and the special pageant on 14th December.

There will also be Festive Walks of the estate on 13th, 14th, 20th & 21st December along with appearances by Father Christmas on 6th, 7th, 13th, 14th, 20th, and 21st December.

Stephen Bennett August 2008

BNTA Holiday 2008

This year we were based at Torquay from Sunday 10th to Thursday 14th August. We stayed at the Palace Hotel, which lived up to its grand sounding name with splendid food, good service and a fabulous location. Its gardens lead down to Anstey's Cove - a typical gem of Devon coastline. Despite advancing years, quite a few of us made it all the way down to the cove (and back again) before our evening meal on Wednesday.



Palace Hotel

The weather was like the proverbial curate's egg - "good in parts". But most of us did a fairly good job of visiting the houses during the showers, and the gardens during the sunny spells. We broke our journey on the way down with a visit of a couple of hours to Stourhead - a National Trust house with a garden containing several lakes and many famous follies.



Stourhead

Although Christine had made provision for several options each day, we didn't exploit the range of choices as much as in previous years. Monday morning found most of us visiting Compton Castle - small for the title, but perfect in its own way. In 1583 Humphrey Gilbert, an "adventurer" who lived there, landed at St John's in Newfoundland and claimed the area as a British colony. His exploits are celebrated in exhibits throughout the house.

In the afternoon we visited Coleton Fishacre, a house with associations to a very different Gilbert. It was built as a country home for Rupert D'Oyly Carte and his wife between 1925 and 1926. The architect was a former assistant to Edwin Lutyens, so the house exemplifies the principles of the Arts and Crafts movement. The garden runs down a narrow combe from the house to the sea at Pudcombe Cove and features rare and exotic plants.

On Tuesday morning we had a Red-Guide tour of Exeter - a new departure which was much appreciated, before going on to Killerton. Here there is an 18 acre hillside garden created by Scotsman John Veitch. He was employed in 1808 as a nurseryman by the owner of the 4,000 acre estate, Sir Thomas Acland.

Because of its mild climate Killerton was used as something of a trial ground for plants brought back from all corners of the globe. Many plants which are now found throughout the British Isles were first planted at Killerton by Veitch and his successors. A bi-centenary exhibition inside the house is devoted to "The Plant Hunters". A brief dramatic presentation in the library gave a more personal slant to this piece of local history.



Fallen tree

On Wednesday our planned coach tour around Plymouth Hoe had to be cancelled when we were delayed by a fallen tree, the victim of exceptionally high winds that morning. However we did make it to Saltram House with its fine Robert Adam's rooms, plasterwork ceilings and period furniture. There is an outstanding collection of paintings, and also lots of activities for the kids. Many of us succumbed to a second childhood challenge of finding the tiny mice in the pictures in the nursery!

On our way home we stopped at Montacute House. Like Benington, which we visited last year, this is home to one of the National Portrait Gallery's permanent loan collections. It is a particularly well focused display housed in the Long Gallery and adjacent rooms. The principal theme is Tudor and Jacobean Royalty; but this year there is a further exhibition focusing on women both at court and in noble households of the era.

"Where to next year?" - Wales or South West Scotland are contenders.



Montacute House

Success of Coach Outings

Most years five or six coach trips have been arranged with any profit made being given to the National Trust. The surplus was over £900 last year and we expect to make £1,000 this year. We are indebted to those who take on the role of organiser of the visit and act as courier. For a number of years Joyce & Brian Pidgeon, who live in Bourton-under-Needwood have very ably taken on this task for us; but following Brian's accident they will no longer be able to continue. We sincerely thank them for the time and help they have given to us.

We are looking to the future with a meeting on 26th August to decide on next years venues. At present there are only 3 of us! We are looking for assistance and anyone interested in joining us would be warmly welcomed. Telephone 0121 475 7933 for time and venue. Members are also invited to make suggestions for visits which are possible in a day.

The coaches are booked by myself the Convener, so what we require is the Courier to book the venue and obtain information for the leaflet, which is sent out with details and costs to members, and to receive bookings.

It has been suggested at a recent main committee that members may be interested in outings during the winter and early spring, but unless there are members willing to take on the role of Courier this is difficult. Please let us have

Oberammergau Passion Play 2010

We would like to ascertain the amount of interest in taking a group of, say 25, people to see the 2010 Passion Play. The trip could well involve a short holiday in the Austrian Tyrol, probably flying via Munich.

The group would likely consist of people from St Mary's Church, Selly Oak, (and other local Churches) plus members of the Birmingham National Trust Association. All arrangements will be made using a reputable/bonded Travel Agency. If you are interested in this venture please contact Don or Christine, ASAP.

Don: 0121 604 3843 Christine: 0121 244 0837

The next stage will be an open meeting (in Selly Oak) in September 2008.

Kings Norton Craft Fair

This event takes place on Saturday 8 November between 10am and 2pm.

We have had a cake stall for the last two years, manned by three or four people. This year there is a split site - in the newly-restored Saracen's Head and St Nicholas' Church.

We would be very grateful for offers of help - if only for an hour or two to give us a breather.

It is also Farmers' Market Day, so please assist by completing the reply slip.

Talks

I do hope you will enjoy the programme of talks which I have arranged for this season - kicking off at the end of September with a visit from Foster's Cheese of Earlswood. I believe there will be samples and also cheese on sale.

I also have a big plea for the Cotteridge meetings. I am sure you enjoy our cup of tea or coffee in the interval, but last season the kitchen was manned mainly by two or three stalwarts. We would be most grateful for offers - it's very easy and the regulars will be on hand to give assistance if necessary. So please fill in the slip on the reply sheet and return it to me as soon as possible so that a rota can be drawn up.

Anniversary Lunch

Saturday, 11th October 2008

*Tally Ho Conference Centre,
Persore Road, Edgbaston.*

Speaker: Mr Alan Langstaff

Property Manager at Baddesley Clinton

There is still time to apply for tickets for this year's Anniversary Lunch. Ticket details and menu choices all as in the Spring Newsletter. Please send your application and cheque to Mary Parker as soon as possible. If you have mislaid these details please telephone Mary on 0121 420 3948.

Coffee Morning

On Saturday 20 September I am hosting my second Macmillan Coffee Morning. You may remember that last year we lost Norma Bark who had been our Assistant Treasurer until ill health overtook her. Again this event will be held in her memory, and I am hoping it will be a sunny and warm day (last year was dull and cold).

It will be held at 1, Hunstanton Avenue, Harborne between 10.30 and 12.30, when home-made cakes and preserves will be on sale and there will be a raffle. If you wish to stay on for a light lunch, an extra charge of £3 will be made. The proceeds, of course, will be going to the Macmillan World's Greatest Coffee Morning Fund. Please come and enjoy the morning.

Mary Parker

Mary Parker's Lunch

My Annual Lunch will be held on the first Saturday in January (3rd) at 1, Hunstanton Avenue, Harborne between 12 noon and 2pm. Lunch will be served at 12.30pm.

There will be a cake stall and raffle (please no bring and buy). The cost this year will be £3 for soup, main course buffet and dessert. Space is at a premium so places are limited to 30.

Please book via the enclosed reply sheet.

Mary Parker

Reports

WIGHTWICK MANOR - JULY 17

A very comfortable journey saw a party of 39 members assembled at Wightwick Manor. Almost on our doorstep, Wightwick is a Mecca for those interested in the Pre-Raphaelite movement. The house, ostensibly Victorian and originally the home of Theodore Mander, a Wolverhampton industrialist, houses an amazing collection of memorabilia. This was collected by himself and his wife and subsequent members of their family and superbly reflects the influence of the Arts and Craft movement.

There are William Morris wallpapers, fabrics and furniture, stained glass windows by Charles Kemp, William de Morgan tiles, paintings by Rossetti, Millais, Holman Hunt and Edward Burne Jones amongst so much to admire.

Our guides were splendid; enthusiastic, thoroughly informed and always ready to answer questions. Sadly time did not allow us to do justice to the garden, but there can always be a next time. Thank you Maureen a delightful day and greatly appreciated. **Ted Robertson**

QUARRY BANK MILL

On Saturday 10 May, the first BNTA coach outing of the season headed up the M6 to Quarry Bank Mill and Styal Estate. We were blessed with good weather and road conditions. On arrival we were split into two groups - one going to visit the Apprentice House

where young children combined education with work in exchange for food, clothing and lodgings. There were a few 'ughs' when the guide showed us leeches in a jar!

The Mill itself was very interesting, if somewhat noisy at times, but to me the best part was the 'Secret Garden'. The Greg family's retreat attached to the Mill (the house is not yet open to the public). The garden is being restored to its Victorian glory and even its unfinished state was a magnificent blaze of colour - rhododendrons, azaleas, tulips and other bedding plants.

I have Quarry Bank Mill on my list of 'must return to' places to see the garden as restoration continues. A very good day was had by all (and lots of ice cream was consumed)! **Mary Parker**

Christmas Social

Monday 15th December 2008
Friends Meeting House, Cotteridge
at 7.30 pm

This year's entertainment will be a talk from Bob Broadfield. The cost for Talk and Supper will be as last year - £9. Please apply for tickets using the form enclosed and send a cheque with s.a.e to Mary Parker as soon as possible.

Please Note: There is now no Café available at Carrs Lane talks venue

Visit to Liverpool

Saturday 12 July 2008 saw a coachful of BNTA members bouncing along the motorway in the early morning sunshine en route for the current European City of Culture: Liverpool. For me it was not a first visit, but the earlier one had been a school trip at the age of eleven and as that was rather a long time ago, perhaps I can be forgiven for remembering nothing about it!

The driver dropped us off at Albert Dock and promised to pick us up again in just over five hours. Alas, we could see at once that we were never going to do the city justice in so short a time. However, we all resolved to do our best. Many members chose to hop on the open-topped bus with a guide to draw attention to the best bits of the city. My particular group of friends and I had a different game plan: we headed first for Tate Liverpool to see the Klimt exhibition. Many other visitors had the same idea and we found we would have a sixty minute wait before we could be admitted, so, having bought our tickets, we improved the shining hour by joining the short queue at the restaurant. What a good thing we did, for shortly afterwards the queue was very long indeed. As it was, we were quickly seated and cheerfully served a delicious meal by our little Scouse waitress, who was proud to tell us that all ingredients were locally sourced - at least, I think that's what she said! It was really good value, anyway and there's nothing like a good bargain to put me in a receptive mood. The Klimt exhibition was very interesting. We hadn't realised that he believed in combining art with domestic usefulness and so were surprised to see a Klimt-designed toilet roll holder nestling amongst the exotic paintings.

Then it was back to the waterside to board a World War II DUKW for an amphibious sightseeing tour of the city - or so we thought. Unfortunately, we had underestimated the popularity of such a trip and found there were no more tickets available for that afternoon. I was really disappointed, as 'ducks' figure large in my life and I had been looking forward to being aboard a Liverpool one. However, it's amazing how quickly one's spirits rally vis-à-vis a pot of tea and a huge slice of lemon drizzle cake in John Lewis' tea-room. There were dozens of trendy bars and eateries lining the Albert Dock, but we really felt that at that moment, cosy and reassuring was what we needed.

Our tea break gave us time to consider an alternative to the duck paddle. As one of our group has lived in Liverpool and is familiar with the landmarks, we hit upon the idea of using our national senior citizens' bus passes to pick up the city circular bus and, after a short walk, during which I took my first ever photograph with a mobile telephone, when a young Muslim girl at the bus stop shyly asked if I would snap her at the waterside, off we went. Our in-house guide did well, but I have a suspicion she omitted the spicier memories of her time in the city. Pity, perhaps another time!

Shortly after the end of our circular bus trip our coach reappeared and we were all back on board, comparing notes. It was agreed that Liverpool provided an excellent day out with so much to see to satisfy people of varied interests. Indubitably, we need to go again and for longer. Perhaps it could be considered for a BNTA holiday or a weekend away. Thank you very much to all involved in organising the visit.

Teresa Spain

Old Brum Series - 1956 to 1960

Change - change - a great deal of change during this period for me as well as for Old Brum. I oscillated between Birmingham and Liverpool (where I studied 'Biochemistry'). So I saw Old Brum in 'patches'. Rebuilding in Birmingham was well under way - but at nowhere near the pace of the 1960's. Trams had disappeared and diesel trains were being slowly introduced - plus people were getting concerned about the 'smog'.



Don in 1960

No student loans at that time - so I found vacation work: on a Herefordshire hop-farm, in a Smethwick laundry, on a removal van, sorting parcels at a railway depot, packing chocolates at Cadbury's and delivering the post at Christmas. Youth Hostelling was prominent - a cheap way to get a holiday - and that's how I got to see several of the war-torn cities

in Europe. However, the real austerity period was now a thing in the past.

Although conditions in Birmingham (and the UK) had considerably improved since War II - many younger people were actively engaged in seeking emigration to Canada, Australia, New Zealand and even Kenya. I had a brother and a sister who both went Canada. Still - Birmingham was altering rapidly with many bombsites now repaired/rebuilt. The City was beginning to build many high-rise flats and also changing to comprehensive schooling.

Funnily enough - after many job applications and interviews - for my first 'proper' job I ended up in the Chemist's Department in Cadbury's Bournville Factory - so like a 'Brummie'!

Don Fripp

Public Address System

For some years now – Graham McCauley has looked after our Public Address System – moving the equipment from venue to venue, setting-up and general maintenance. Particularly at our Talks and Anniversary Lunch this equipment is a noticeable asset.

Graham is currently on 'sabbatical' and would like help (or release) from this particular function. If anyone is interested in this aspect of our activities ('job-sharing' is possible) please contact Graham on 0121 244 0837.

Thanks Muriel

Thank you Muriel for all you have done for the BNTA over many years. Muriel was a student at the Birmingham College of Art and as a teacher taught Art in schools within the City of Birmingham for a lifetime. This skill was just what was needed when Muriel took on the job of organising photographs and pictures of



BNTA activities to display on boards which were used at the Barber Lectures and at other places including AGMs, Cannon Hill Park, Kings Norton Craft Fairs and many other venues where BNTA had stalls to advertise our works. Muriel has been a member of the BNTA committee for many years and Convener of the Coach Outings Sub-Committee. Muriel has led the small group of dedicated members who have organised the coach outings schedule as well as leading individual outings herself. On one occasion Muriel led three outings in one year.

As well her work with BNTA, Muriel has contributed much more to this city of ours. She has been a very able member of the bellringing team who ring at St Martins-in-the-Bull Ring and Birmingham Cathedral. This 'band', as they are called, has won many awards and has rung the bells in many churches and cathedrals throughout Britain.

Muriel will be 90 years old in October 2008 and is planning a large celebration. May it be a very happy time for you Muriel and an opportunity for everyone to say THANK YOU for all that you have done for BNTA.

Thanks Joan

Thank you Joan for all you have done for the BNTA over many years. Joan's working life as a School Secretary brought just the skills needed when Joan joined the BNTA Committee and was responsible for organising social activities. When Anne Skinner retired Joan took on the task of Minutes Secretary both for Committee meetings and the AGMs.

Many of us have enjoyed the Christmas (now Anniversary) Lunches, Christmas Socials, Garden Parties and other social gatherings with delicious food and entertainment of many and various kinds. Thank you Joan; we have enjoyed every single one.



Joan has also supported the National Trust by volunteering to help at the Reception Desk at the Back to Backs, again meeting people and making them feel welcome. Many thanks Joan.

Workhouses

by Chris Upton

Anyone who has been within shouting range of me over the last few months will know that I'm writing a book about workhouses. Luckily for the publisher, I'm not the only person drawn to the subject. Although I'm spending most of time in the 18th and early 19th Century, the workhouse casts a long shadow, almost to my generation and certainly to the last one. I'm often being told of grandparents who dreaded the sight of the City Hospital and Selly Oak, simply because of their old workhouse associations. One was Birmingham Union workhouse, and the other was the union workhouse for Kings Norton.

The National Trust too has recognized the importance of, and interest in, these 'bastilles of the poor'. The workhouse at Southwell is one of its more recent acquisitions, and helps to show the scale - and often the architectural quality - of some of these buildings. They were certainly built to last and that's one of the reasons that the NHS of the 21st Century is so grateful. Imagine hospital provision in the West Midlands without Selly Oak, Dudley Road, Sandwell District, New Cross, Walsall Manor and Wordsley, all former workhouses.

Not so long back I had two members of my family in the workhouse. My father was in New Cross, the old Wolverhampton union workhouse, while my auntie was (and still is) happily retired in Shifnal workhouse, which was converted into flats for older residents. If you find the subject as fascinating as I do, and have

enjoyed (if that's the right word) a visit to Southwell, you might care to see the two other workhouses in England which are open to the public. One is at Gressenhall in Norfolk, where the workhouse shares space with the Museum of Norfolk Life. If the place looks enormous for sparsely populated Norfolk, that's because it served no less than 51 parishes. Incidentally, at Gressenhall they have no problem with providing a rather nice tea-room on site, some-thing the National Trust thought was somewhat tasteless. I've often puzzled about that decision. After all, the castle was a medieval killing machine, and no one would object to a cafe there.

The other open-for-visitors workhouse (with no obligation to become an inmate) is at Ripon. Given that this place has been set up, renovated and staffed only by volunteers, I think they have done a splendid job, though they have as yet taken over only a fraction of the whole institution.

I have fond hopes (but little expectation) that one day either the gatehouse at City Hospital or a small piece of Selly Oak might be preserved to tell the story of the paupers of Birmingham. But my suspicion is that NHS trusts are far too busy looking after the living than to worry about preserving a little of their own past. In the meantime, I'll soldier on with the book as a way of keeping history alive, but don't expect a sensible conversation with me about any other subject for the next few months. Except possibly about football.