BIRMINGHAM National Trust Association

A voluntary Association of National Trust Members & Volunteers founded in 1991 to support the work of the National Trust

Newsletter

Issue 35  Spring 2009

Inside this issue:

President in the Workhouse  4
Back to Back Thanks  7
Boulton Bicentenary  8
Old Brum Series  10

** STOP PRESS **

Seats are still available on some coach outings. See Page 10 and Phone Maureen on 0121 475 7933

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Extra Car Outing booked. See Page 5

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From the Chairman

Dear Friends,

Firstly, may I say a sincere ‘thank you’ to all BNTA Members – for the hard work undertaken and the enthusiastic support by so many people. Volunteers and participants are our ‘life-blood’. Please keep up the good work.

During the past year we have been able to maintain a large and varied programme of activities and events (approximately 50 in number). I am delighted that the coming twelve months also has an extensive programme. We have increased the number and variety of coach outings, re-introduced car outings, and added more craft fairs to the list. Also, I am glad to say that the restored Barber Lecture series is proving successful.

However it is necessary to review the overall programme from time to time. This has become the case with the ‘Carrs Lane Thursday Afternoon Talks’ (see – separate article in this current Spring Mailing).

Graham McCauley and Brian Pratt are returning to the Committee – Graham is taking over the job of Membership Secretary from his wife Christine (who will continue organizing the BNTA Summer Holidays) and Brian is restarting the car outings (with the help of Ann Price). Administratively, we need to visit our BNTA Constitution at the coming 2009 AGM.

Change is again in the air – Earle Kessler has been replaced by Caroline Cooper - at Heelis – to look after Volunteer Supporter Groups such as BNTA. Caroline is the Guest Speaker at our coming April AGM. We do hope many of you will be able to attend this AGM and welcome Caroline (see – Agenda elsewhere in this Newsletter).

In the longer term – we need to continue being vigilant in recruiting new BNTA Members and in attracting new people to serve on our Committee. If you have any questions or suggestions in these respects – do please discuss them with any Committee Member.

Lastly – may we all continue to enjoy our time together in the year ahead.

Sincerely,

Don Fripp
Craft Fairs

In November 2006 BNTA booked a table at the Kings Norton Craft Fair; selling cake and marmalade. We did so well, that the following year we booked two tables, again making a substantial sum for our funds. At the time the Saracens Head was being restored, so we were in St Nicholas' Church. Last year the Saracens Head had re-opened, and we occupied one side of the new Main Hall, and we sold out before closing time.

This year, there are two Craft Fairs plus the Kings Norton Festival. By the time you receive this Newsletter, the first fair will have been and gone (hopefully very successful again). The Festival is being held on Saturday 11 July and the Craft Fair on Saturday 14 November.

I would be grateful for offers of home made cakes and jam to sell on our two stalls, and also offers of help on those days. Both events coincide with the superb farmers' market, and the church is open between 10am and noon selling tea, coffee and biscuits for 50p!

This is a chance to raise money for BNTA and enjoy yourself at the same time. 

Mary Parker

BNITA Walkers

During the last 12 months we have had some new ramblers joining us. In total there are about 18 members who walk with us during the year, but there were four starters on a very foggy November day who walked across Cofton Park, then by the reservoir and on to the Lickey Hills with a stop for coffee at the Visitor Centre. An opportunity to browse round and read the information about the hills and then lunch at the local hostelery The Hare & Hounds.

Fourteen of us enjoyed a chilly start on our walk through Lightwoods Park. In the grounds stands the former home of Sir Francis Galton FRS; African explorer, founder of the science of eugenics and cousin of Charles Darwin; the house now used by the Stained Glass artists. Then we reached Warley Woods which began life as a private parkland for the Galton family who were Birmingham Gunmakers. A gothic mansion called Warley Abbey was built in 1819, and remained until demolished in 1957. The site was saved from being developed for housing by public subscription and was opened as a public park in 1906, administered by Birmingham City Council.

Warley Woods Community Trust was formed in 1997 and in 2004 the Trust took on the park's management. This makes it the first urban park in the United Kingdom to be managed by a community trust. Warley Woods is a 40 hectare (100 acre) community park; a mix of woodland open meadow and a golf course. As a result of its historic plan, designed by Humphrey Repton, it is registered Grade 2 on the English Register of Parks and Gardens, although little more than three miles from the centre of Birmingham.

Having walked at a leisurely pace we reached the golf club, which is open to the public and enjoyed lunch there. In the summer we usually have a picnic lunch, but if other facilities are available, we use them.

Maureen Hill
Northfield Workhouse

by Dr Chris Upton

A few weeks back I gave the first of the National Trust Birmingham Lectures for 2009. The subject – currently close to my heart – was the workhouses of Birmingham, of which there were once nine. Given that there were bound to be people in the audience from across the city, I felt duty-bound to tell them where their own parish workhouse was located. If the recession bites any deeper, we may all be looking for one.

I didn’t have a problem locating most of them. Harborne and Edgbaston, Yardley and Aston, and Birmingham itself, were duly uncovered and described. None is still standing today, of course, but old maps and other evidence allow me to pin-point them, and I even went off to photograph the sites. I wonder if the owner of a certain large house on Somerset Road, or a couple of other substantial properties on Lordswood Road are aware what ground they occupy.

Northfield and Handsworth, however, are another matter. There are parish archives but (inevitably) they do not indicate where they were. The clerk who prepared the workhouse accounts knew perfectly well where it was, and was, after all, not writing for us. All I knew - as far as Northfield was concerned - was that in November 1839 the buildings and land had been sold to one Robert Cotterill. He was a property owner in the 19th-century village and owned, amongst other holdings, the Bell Inn on the Bristol Road (now gone) and the Great Stone Inn in Church Road (which is still there). The trouble was, because of the extent of Mr Cotterill’s property portfolio, it was impossible to say which of them had been the workhouse.

In such circumstances it’s best to wear one’s ignorance on one’s sleeve. You never know if someone in the audience is privy to information which the so-called expert has overlooked. So it turned out, and the location of Northfield workhouse is a mystery no longer. My plea for help was taken up by a couple from Kings Norton. They were still in touch with a man who used to live in Northfield, and had undertaken some research on its history. This man’s grandmother had lived in Northfield and years ago had drawn him a map of the village as she remembered it. Luckily, despite moving away from the Midlands, he still had it in his attic.

Mrs Turner’s hand-drawn map places the workhouse, along with the parish gaol and the parish constable’s house, on the Bristol Road, between the Bell Inn and what was then Ash Bank Farm. There is a row of unprepossessing 1960s’ shops on the site today, almost opposite the top of Church Road. The tithe map does indeed confirm that Robert Cotterill owned this plot in 1840.

Now, I just need some help with Handsworth …

Dr Chris Upton
**Holiday 2009**

There are still a few places on our 2009 Holiday in Llandudno during the last week in August. It is based at the Ambassador hotel which is one of the large purpose built hotels on “The Parade” facing the sea. My apologies if you received details without a stamp, we had a stamp left over after the posting. If you asked for details and have not yet received them please contact me as soon as possible at the usual membership address or on 0121 244 0837.

The hotel is within easy walking distance of the main shopping area, the Great Orme and bus stops. This year we will only be visiting four National Trust properties as a group: Powis Castle, Plas Newydd, Penrhyn Castle and Chirk Castle. We will have morning visits to Caernarfon and Beaumaris where you can visit the castles (CADW) or explore the locality. It may seem like a lot of castles but they are very varied. On the Wednesday we will visit Llanberis where some members will take the train up Snowdon while others will visit the Slate Museum, tour a power station built into a hill, take a trip on the lakeside railway or just absorb the scenery.

Although our bus passes are not valid in Wales, Conwy and Bodnant Gardens are both fairly close so not very expensive to get to by bus if you want to visit them.

**Christine McCauley**

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**An Extra Car Outing**

**Monaughty, Radnorshire**

A rare opportunity to visit a perfect example of a large Elizabethan manor house (built about 1565 by James Price) without any modern facilities and complete with all its original features.

The Great Chamber on the first floor with decorative ceiling and patterned floor (the only such room in Radnorshire) and the Great Hall below with its huge fireplace, make this an outstanding visit.

The house is not open to the public and is not suited to people with restricted mobility.

Refreshments on arrival (included).

And on the same day:

**The Judges Lodging Museum, Presteigne**

Formerly the Old Manor House, later the residence for Welsh judges (“the most commodious and elegant apartments for a judge in Wales” - Lord Chief Justice Campbell, 1855) the restored building houses the judges apartments, the kitchen, servants quarters, damp cells and courtroom.

(One of Britain’s top 10 museums in the Best of British Awards, 2004-5)

**DATE:** Saturday, 13th June, 2009.

Cost per person: £18.50, Non-BNTA £19.50

This new outing has been included on the booking form enclosed with this Newsletter.

**Brian Pratt**
Thank you to Phil Mayhew

Many people give time and energy week by week, every month and for years to support the activities of BNTA. Phil Mayhew and his wife Ruth are two of these people.

Phil had been a member of the BNTA Committee from October 1991 until 2006. Another time-consuming task for the National Trust was to order, receive and distribute over 5000 leaflets including Visitor Guides to National Trust properties in the West Midlands area and to other places such as libraries across Birmingham.

You will have seen Phil collecting entry fees for morning and afternoon talks for many years. BNTA purchased a display stand and a gazebo, which again for many years, Phil and Ruth have taken to the Barber Lectures and other venues such as Cannon Hill Park and the Allotments Association Open Days to give publicity to BNTA. Thank you Phil for all your loyal support of the Association and its members over many years.

We are glad to have members like you and Ruth who have given time and energy to make activities happen.

Audrey Randall

Ramble Woes

Back last summer we enjoyed a visit to Packwood House, meeting at Snow Hill for a train to Lapworth. Unfortunately, we soon learnt that trains would not be stopping there, as due to ongoing rail work at Rugby extra coaches were being put on by Chiltern Trains which meant they were too long for the platforms at Lapworth and Hatton. Passengers would have to go by bus from Dorridge. OK, but arriving there we found it was an hours wait! We eventually booked a 6 seater taxi to take us to Lapworth. One member did write and complain, as neither Snow Hill or Moor Street could give us times of the bus, and received a credit note to use another time. So later this summer this will be used on our walk at Warwick, when we will enjoy walking alongside the Avon with views of the castle and possible visits to the Mill Garden and Hill House Victorian Gardens, which have been restored.

Many thanks to those who have led walks, i.e. Greta Lacey, Brenda Grindley and Graham McCauley.

Maureen Hill, Rambles Co-ordinator
Where our Donation Money Went

Here is a note received recently from Jackie Williams

Dear Birmingham National Trust Association,
A very big thank you for the kind donation you made to the Back to Backs. The money has been well spent in replenishing our costumes for the school workshops. The Patchwork group at the property have been hard at work making new clothes for the groups; these have included new aprons, waistcoats and caps. As you can see from the photo the children enjoyed their outfits and their visit immensely.

We have also supplemented the outfits we have for our World War II workshops - this has included purchasing clothes from vintage shops and again the kind efforts of the sewing group who are very proficient at making wrap over aprons. Without your contribution to our school project we would have found it difficult to provide extra period costumes to enhance the children’s visit and involve them in the living history that the property provides.

Many thanks
Regards,
Jackie Williams
Bicentenary of Matthew Boulton

Let us celebrate the Bicentenary of Matthew Boulton, one of Birmingham’s greatest sons writes Audrey Randall.

Many of you, like me went to a Grammar School and were put in a House. Mine was Boulton House, so from aged 11 years, Matthew Boulton has been a special person in my life.

Matthew lived from 1728 to 1809. Born in Birmingham, the son of a maker of buckles, buttons and small decorative objects such as snuff boxes and nutmeg graters, he attended a local school before joining his father in the family business. At 21 Matthew married Mary Robinson from Lichfield. His wife and father both died in 1759. Matthew took over the family business and married his first wife’s sister Ann Robinson in 1760. The following year he leased 13 acres of land in Hands-worth and began the building of the great Soho Manufactory. Goods manufactured there were exported all over the world.

They included silver tableware, ormolu, coins, medals and tokens. Those of you who were able to attend the Birmingham National Trust Lecture at the Barber Institute recently, would have heard in detail of the tokens and coins that were produced in very large numbers.

Soho Manufactory

Matthew and his second wife Ann lived at Soho House and had a tea house built in the garden. Visitors to the Soho factory could take tea in his garden. The Lunar Society began in 1766 and met in Boulton’s home - Soho House. In 1788 Boulton was a member of the General Hospital Committee and they organised the first of the Birmingham Music Festivals.

You will know that the Assay mark for Birmingham is the Anchor, stamped on all precious metals. Matthew Boulton campaigned to establish an Assay Office in
by Audrey Randall

Birmingham and succeeded in 1773. Before that time his goods had to be transported to Chester or London to be marked. They were often damaged or even stolen in transit, so an Assay Office in Birmingham was vital.

There are many events planned for the Bicentenary Celebrations:

- A major exhibition at the Gas Hall 30 May - 27 September 2009
- Exhibitions and displays at Soho House from 4 April 2009
- Displays at the Museum of the Jewellery Quarter from 28 March 2009
- Displays at Sarehole Mill and Birmingham Central Library
- Coins at Barber Institute of Fine Arts 8 - 15 May

A Boulton Trail is planned with programmes for families and schools
The Assay Office commissioned a silver candelabrum by a local silversmith. This piece has already been on display at the Spring Fair at the NEC and will be at the Museum of the Jewellery Quarter until 6 September 2009.

Come, let us celebrate Matthew Boulton, one of Birmingham’s greatest sons!

Talks

February Northfield meeting.
We are sorry that the meeting on 10 February had to be cancelled due not only to weather conditions but also that we had been advised that there would be no refreshments on sale. The speaker, Lynda Kettle, brings ‘props’ to the meeting and she was pleased not to have to carry them around in the ice and slush. She will coming at a later date - so watch this space!

Afternoon Meetings
We have been dealt a blow by Carrs Lane. When I tried to book a room from October 2009, I was told that the rooms were already spoken for. Consideration is now being given to abandoning the afternoon talks and instead arranging visits to places local to the city (ie within bus pass boundaries).

A few suggestions are given below and if you would be interested, please fill in the slip enclosed with this newsletter.

Blakesley Hall Museum of the Jewellery Quarter Sarehole Mill St Nicholas Place, Kings Norton (Fridays)

Broadfield Glass Museum Birmingham Magistrates Court Soho House

I would also be glad of any other suggestions. There are two ways of responding - either by post to me (address shown on the slip) or by email to Don Fripp (chairman@bnata.org.uk), giving the venues which interest you.

Mary Parker

Issue 35  Spring 2009
Old Brum Series 1960 - 1965

Change, Change, Change! Birmingham is changing, all around us – at an increasing pace. “Old Brum” is no longer recognizable. City Centre and suburbs are being rebuilt – buildings are getting bigger and taller. The old Bullring and the Markets are disappearing, slums are demolished, an ‘Inner Ring Road’ takes shape and New Street Station gets a ‘face-lift’ – and so on, and on!

Does it sound familiar - does history repeat itself? Yes – change is inevitable. Yet the period 1960-1965 really did change Birmingham. The “Old Brum” known by my parents and grandparents – and by me until a young man – did vanish to a large extent. Attitudes altered – families began to spread further afield – in this country and beyond. Some aspects of the situation were for the general good – especially improved housing. But the loss of the larger family circle did cause regrets. One results of these population changes has been that Birmingham is a very much more cosmopolitan city than in the early days of my parents. Some good things did happen in the 1960’s – one of them being my marriage to a young lady called Sylvia. The photograph is taken from an old black and white photograph in 1963. By the way, I left Birmingham in 1965 to work for the ‘CWS/Co-op’ in the Manchester area – to make sweets and table-jellies – and I did not return to Birmingham until 1990. This “Old Brum Series” for the BNTA Newsletters has now a natural ending in 1965 – unless, unless that is, some ‘fill-in’ items come to mind. Don Fripp (March 2009)

Don and Sylvia Fripp – 28 December 1963

Coach Bookings

For the first time details and booking forms were sent out before Christmas, so members could note and reserve visits in their diaries. Some bookings arrived almost immediately, while others have been coming in slowly. There are still plenty of places on most coaches, the exception being the visit to The Courts and Gt. Chalfield in July.

Currently available seats: Craven Arms 15; Charlecote 29; Oxford 23; Hereford & Hampton Court 7; Osterley 9; Dunham Massey 24.

Why not support us? Any profit made is included in the annual donations made to National Trust projects by the Association.

Maureen Hill - Coach Co-ordinator
Our AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Association will take place at 2.30pm on Saturday 25th April 2009, at Selly Oak Methodist Church Hall, Langleys Road, Birmingham.

AGENDA
1. Welcome and opening remarks from our President, Chris Upton.
2. Apologies.
3. Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held on 19th April 2008.
4. Matters arising from the 2008 AGM.
5. The 2009 Annual Report of the Chairman and Committee
7. Treasurer’s report and approval of Annual Accounts to 31st Dec. 2008
9. Treasurer to report on the BNTA donations from 2008 to the National Trust.
10. Electoral motion proposed by Don Fripp and seconded by Audrey Randall 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, Audrey Randall and Christine McCauley".
11. Election of Officers and Members of the Committee for 2009/10. (Nominations must be sent to the Secretary to arrive at least fourteen days before the 2009 AGM, using the enclosed slip, and must have the consent of the nominees.)
12. Presentation to Philip Mayhew.
13. 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) a cheque for our 2008 donations, to be passed on to local properties.
14. Any Other Business
15. Our Guest Speaker is Caroline Cooper, “Volunteering Adviser (Supporter Groups)” at Heelis, who will speak on “Developing Support for the Associations in the Future”
16. Tea (please use slip enclosed with Spring mailing to order your 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

Donations to the Trust

Resulting from our activities in 2008 we are able to give a total of £6,100 to National Trust projects. Instead of following our usual practice of making small donations to a number of projects, we are this year making significant donations to two very important major projects. £3,000 has already been sent to the Seaton Delaval Hall Appeal and at our Annual General Meeting in April £3,100 will be given to the Croome Park Appeal. In addition, the notional interest earned on money we have on deposit with the National Trust came to £393.80 and has been given to the Neptune Coastal Campaign.

John Surtees - Treasurer
Northfield Talk: My Life And Hats

Where did you get that hat?
Where did you get that tile?
Isn’t it a nobby one and just the proper style?
I should like to have one just the same as that!
Where’er I go, they shout: “Hello!
Where did you get that hat?”
This must surely be the experience of Mrs Catherine Clark, our speaker at Northfield Baptist Church in December. Heaven knows at what time she arrived at the hall to set up her visual aids, but the whole of the front of the room was filled with the display of the most beautiful and expensive - headgear. She told us a little about her life and how she came to be in the business of hiring out hats for ladies to wear at special occasions. Catherine excels at getting to the root of the client’s anxiety, helping her to find a hat which doesn’t just complement her special outfit, but also brings out the personality of the wearer and, by its very presence, lifts her confidence and inspires happy thoughts in those who behold it. Since many of these hats cost hundreds of pounds to buy, it seems reasonable that it should fulfil these extra functions and not just keep one’s head warm and dry!
Catherine passed round samples of hats dating back to the Fifties and earlier. These hats caused some excited cries of; “I remember those!” as we thought back to the fashion magazines of yesteryear. Although beautifully made with exotic decorations, they looked a bit sad next to current models with accessories to knock one’s eye out.
As well as hats, Catherine hires out matching handbags for a small extra fee. Most of them were too small to hold the armoury that many of us cart around, but set off the hat and the rest of the outfit to perfection. She told us tales of drama, tragedy and humour that had befallen some of her clients. It was clear that an enormous house and an infinitely long-suffering husband are requirements for anyone wishing to make a similar career move. Catherine was even brave enough to model the hat she had chosen for her daughter’s wedding and passed round the wedding photos, thus proving that her service really works well.
For me, the best bit was her final invitation to “come and try on some hats”. Mary Parker had been holding me down firmly in my seat throughout the talk, but, once released, I leaped forward as from a coiled spring and had a lovely few minutes pretending that I was going somewhere very glamorous and prestigious.

Margaret Simmons wearing one of Catherine’s hats at a recent wedding

Teresa Spain