

OAK LEAVES

*Mid-Warwickshire Association
of the National Trust*

Spring 2014



No. 83

in support of **National
Trust**



Snowdrops at Charlecote Park. Photo: National Trust

VICE-PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE

As I write this, we are in the approach to Christmas, and by the time you read it March will be here. However, not to be daunted, I am wishing you a Happy New Year, since who is it to say at what time such a wish should be delivered? In 2013 your response to appeals for assistance was good and consequently we have new Committee Members, literature distributors and raffle ticket sellers. Thank you to you all, since your contributions all help in the running of the Association and in conserving funds at this financially stringent time.

At the Annual General Meeting I highlighted the fact that we still do not have a Chairman and I asked you to consider the consequences of this very carefully. I said that I would continue to chair meetings until the end of the present winter season which will be in May, after which it will be for you all to decide on a Chairman to conduct meetings. I always think that if I can do it, anyone can! I have often heard it said that such and such a person is indispensable, but after a short amount of time, this does not prove to be so, and the new arrangements are well accepted. I look forward to seeing who the new Chairman will be.

Special thanks are due to those who have so kindly arranged excursions this year and we very much appreciate the way in which they have come forward to make the arrangements. We really need someone who might be happy to organise a social occasion, so if you think you might be able to do this, with the assistance of the Committee, please have a word with any members of the Committee.

GRAHAM E.COOPER
Vice President

IN REMEMBRANCE OF MARGARET MEARS

We were all very sad to note the death of Margaret Mears in April 2013. She had been ill since January but her passing came as a surprise to us. The Association was represented at her funeral on 9th. May. She had a Welsh upbringing, growing up in Caerphilly, and she had a twin sister. At one time she had lived in Kenilworth and then moved to Leamington where



she put down firm roots in various organisations and became a key member of the congregation at Holy Trinity Church. We were fortunate that she joined the Association and in due course became a useful member of the Committee where her contributions and practical suggestions were always welcomed. Margaret became a familiar figure on the door at the Royal Spa Centre, where she was a part of the hosting team for members and visitors at monthly meetings. It will not be easy to fill the gap which her departing has left.

A happy photograph of Margaret on the Association's visit to Falmouth in 2007.

VISIT TO THE ANDERTON BOAT LIFT AND MORETON OLD HALL 19TH SEPTEMBER 2013

The coach left Newbold Comyn promptly at 8.15 am and we gradually relaxed as we drove through Leamington, Kenilworth, Balsall Common and - through leafy lanes - onward north. Suddenly - just as we were driving down an approach to the motorway - billows of smoke rose up in the middle of the coach! Startled shouting quickly alerted our driver who pulled in and stopped the coach at the very busy approach to a roundabout, causing havoc to the 3 lane heavy traffic behind. With true British grit, we all piled out on to the grass verge where - fortunately for us - we discovered that we were at the entrance to the National Motorcycle Museum. So, clambering through a hedge and up a steep slope, we called in to the Motor Museum, where we were welcomed – almost with open arms - and directed upstairs for coffee. Fortunately, we only had to wait about 40 minutes for a (posher) replacement coach from Coventry and were on our way to the Anderton Boat Lift once again.



Photograph: Canal & River Trust

As we neared our destination, the considerable height-level variations between the Trent and Mersey Canal and the River Weaver river levels were very noticeable, as were the several large salt mining plants in the vicinity. We parked quite close to the massive iron framework of the Boat Lift — and soon boarded a large passenger boat at a canal berth.

Along with other passengers, there were about 60 on board as we sailed into our berth in the boat lift. Soon we were smoothly descending to the River Weaver, counter-balanced by another canal boat going upwards to the canal. A very knowledgeable guide explained the process, stating that salt has been extracted from rock salt beds underneath the Cheshire Plain since [Roman](#) times. In the 18th century, along with other goods, it was transported by boat along the River Weaver to the River Mersey and along the new Trent and Mersey canal to the Potteries. Because of the different levels of these waterways, however, transferring cargoes was expensive and so the Boat Lift was built and opened in 1875.

Following an interesting cruise along River Weaver to Northwich and back, we had time to enjoy a quiet little snack or two in the Visitor Centre, before travelling a few miles to the odd-looking Little Moreton Hall - said to be one of the finest examples of a medieval moated manor house in England— a description it would be difficult to argue with!

National Trust guides awaited us and we broke up into two groups – the Pinks and the Whites – touring in opposite directions. Our guide was very informative. She explained that the earliest part of the house was built by a prosperous Cheshire landowner William Moreton in about 1508. It remained in the Moreton family for 450 years, during which many additions and alterations were made. One of these, the addition of a third storey glazed gallery,

caused the lower floors to bow and warp and gives the house a top-heavy appearance. However, much renovation and strengthening work been carried out recently to safeguard the building.

Inside, the many rooms of the house remain unfurnished - just as well as otherwise it would be impossible for larger groups, - such as ours - to get around. However it did enable us to see the various contemporary building details and to congregate to listen to our guide. In the courtyard, it was interesting to see a carved "memo" - by a carpenter who was responsible for some of the installations some 500 years ago – just as the original owner would have seen it.

Soon we were back in the coach, travelling along the M6 after a day out that started off looking like it might be a nightmare but which will have left us all with some very enjoyable memories. Very many thanks indeed to Vera and Derek Booth for all their hard work in organising such an excellent, very enjoyable visit

Gerry Rooney

CHAIRMANSHIP SOLUTION?

Since the appointment of a new Chairman is proving so challenging, the following might be a solution. We could have a Meetings Chairman, who would take the chair at our (approximately 5) Committee Meetings each year. The dates of the meetings could be arranged to suit the Committee Chairman.

We could have two joint Chairmen for our monthly meetings at the Royal Spa Centre. This would be less of a regular commitment since they could agree beforehand who would be on duty at each meeting.

One or two prospective candidates have said that they cannot take on the Association Chairmanship since they are so often away. These arrangements would offer greater flexibility which should better suit people on the move! We are "bending over backwards" to help candidates to come forward.

Your Association needs YOU.

EXCURSIONS 2014

Bookings for trips will be dealt with commencing three weeks after the distribution of this Oak Leaves Magazine, and applications will be acknowledged from this date. If you do not hear from the organizers soon after this, please contact the telephone number on each booking form to check that your application has arrived. **The price of the excursion** includes the cost of coach travel, the driver's gratuity, the cost of any talk or guided tour and admission to properties which do not belong to the National Trust. **Please remember to bring your National Trust Membership Card for entry to NT properties.** As before, excursions will depart from the Leisure Centre at Newbold Comyn, with a further pick-up five minutes later at Newbold Terrace, opposite the Royal Spa Centre.

If, having paid for your excursion, you need to cancel, we suggest that it will be helpful if you are able to find someone else to take your place. The organizers may be able to assist with names and telephone numbers if there is a waiting list, but this cannot be guaranteed, nor can a refund, particularly if certain tickets have to be ordered and paid for well in advance.

The names of the volunteer organisers are on each booking form, so please make sure you address them correctly, but cheques still must be made out to "MID WARWICKSHIRE ASSOCIATION OF THE NATIONAL TRUST" and enclosed with your booking form, together with a stamped, addressed envelope.

Tuesday 29th April 2014

Coach trip to London: 'To God and the Bridge'

We commence the trip in Fleet Street where we collect our Blue Badge Guide. For centuries Londoners relied on the watermen to ferry them across the mighty Thames. Our tour begins with their story told on a short but fascinating trail through Somerset House, one of the last survivors of the grand riverside mansions. You will see the old Watergate, learn about the secret world of the watermen and hear how the River Thames was moved by the Victorians. From there our coach crosses the four City Bridges to tell their stories. We discover the secret mark of the bottomless fund of 'bridge money' built up when Londoners left bequests 'To God and The Bridge.' A carvery lunch [or vegetarian meal] in a pub is included in the price. The afternoon is about the Great Fire of London and we travel by coach to visit two City churches. Only eight survived the fire out of 100 and we visit one of these today. We also visit one of the 'new' churches built by Sir Christopher Wren.

Depart: Newbold Coymn 8 am

Cost £38

Please complete and return the Booking Form enclosed with this newsletter

Thursday 22nd May 2014

Ludlow and the “other” Hampton Court

Ludlow is one of the most attractive county towns in England and well-known for its excellent food. There are several Michelin starred restaurants (see ludlow.org.uk for further details and a map). The oldest building is the Castle (1086) and the town centre is mediaeval, featuring 900 years of fine architecture. There is a compact shopping centre with a central market featuring “Local to Ludlow” on the day of our trip. We arrive at about 11:00 and leave at 13:30, with time for a special lunch, sightseeing and shopping.

The “other” Hampton Court Gardens in Herefordshire cover 1000 acres around a 15th Century Castle. There is a maze with 1000 yews, a rose garden, a kitchen garden, long herbaceous borders and an Orangery designed by Joseph Paxton where you can have tea. Please look at hamptoncourtgardens.org.uk for more information.

The cost of travel and admission to Hampton Court Garden is **£23.00**,

We will leave Newbold Comyn at 09:00 and hope to arrive at 11:00. We leave Ludlow at 13:30 to arrive at Hampton Court at about 14:00. Departure time will be 16:30, ETA back in Leamington 18:30. There will be no stops on the journeys, but the coach has a lavatory on board.

Depart: Newbold Coymn 9 am Arrive back 6.30 pm approx Cost £23

Please complete and return the Booking Form enclosed with this newsletter

June 5th 2014 Historic Cambridge and the Fitzwilliam Museum

After an early start (08:15) we should be in Cambridge in good time for our 10:45 guided **walking tour of historic Cambridge**, including King’s College Chapel, which lasts about 1½ hours. After that you can explore the town and shop and have lunch. There are lots of independent shops: excellent men’s tailors, bookshops, craft shops, music shops ... and a market. Pubs and restaurants are plentiful at all price ranges.

Please look at <http://www.visitcambridge.org/> for more information.

Cambridge town centre is small and it is a short walk to the **Fitzwilliam Museum**, one of the best in the country. <http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/> Admission is free and there is a good cafe.

The coach will pick us up **outside the Fitzwilliam Museum at 15:15**. The journey takes about 2 hours with a break. We are travelling with Johnson’s Coaches.

The cost of travel and the guided tour of Cambridge is £29.00,

Please complete and return the Booking Form enclosed with this newsletter

Tuesday 15th July 2014

**RAF Museum Cosford &
Weston House & park**

The RAF Museum is a must see. Apart from a lot of Iconic Aircraft which have helped to save and shape our history there is the National COLD WAR exhibition in an incredible building that is shaped like an aircraft wing. Relive the days of the Cuban missile crises seated in special pods with multi displays and surround sound and see the tension of the world leaders. We are hoping to see the restoration work taking place on the Dornier 17 (Flying Pencil) rescued from the channel and featured recently on TV.



Photo: Weston House

We move from Cosford a short distance to **Weston House** former home of the Earls of Bradford to tour this impressive property set in 1000 acres of Capability Brown designed park a guided tour will highlight paintings by Van Dyck, Lely and Gainsborough as well as a wealth of beautiful furniture.

Both Cosford and Weston have good catering facilities or picnics can be taken in the grounds.

Depart: Newbold Coyumn 9 am Arrive back 6pm approx

Cost £21

Please complete and return the Booking Form enclosed with this newsletter.

Tuesday August 19th

Burghley House

Burghley House, home of the Cecil family for over 400 years, was built at the end of the 16th Century. There have been few alterations in the exterior architecture since the house was built although the interior was remodelled in the late 17th Century by John, the fifth Earl of Exeter, who was an avid collector of fine art and who established the immense collection of art treasures at Burghley. The collection includes paintings, porcelain and furniture; much of this can be seen in the 16 State Rooms which are open to the public. As well as Capability Brown's landscape garden, we can visit the Garden of Surprises of modern sculpture, trees and shrubs and the new Elizabethan Garden of yew mazes and spurting fountains.

Lunch may be taken as a picnic or in the Orangery Restaurant or Garden Cafe.

Organiser: Graham White, 21 Regency House, Newbold Terrace, Leamington Spa, CV32 4HD.

Depart: Newbold Comyn: 9.00am

Arrive back 7.00pm approximately. Cost £28.50

Please complete and return the Booking Form enclosed with this newsletter.

25 September 2014

Buckingham Palace and the Queen's collection

We are booked on Johnson's coaches to go to Buckingham Palace, leaving at 08:15. We will have a guided tour of the State Rooms, starting at 11:15 and lasting about two hours.

There is a Garden Cafe in the palace (tea, coffee, sandwiches & pastries) or you can have a more substantial lunch in Cardinal Place restaurant mall (Wagamama, M&S etc.), down Buckingham Gate [map on request].

At 14:30 we are booked for an **optional** visit to the "First Georgians" exhibition in the Queens' Gallery. A ticket for this gives you a one year pass to the gallery and costs an extra £8. Please indicate below whether you want this and pay accordingly.

The coach will pick us up **at the starting point at 15:30**. ETA at Newbold Comyn 18:30.

The cost of travel and the guided tour of Buckingham Palace is **£33.00**,

Please complete and return the Booking Form enclosed with this newsletter.

FANCY A REALLY GOOD DAY OUT OR A WEEKEND AWAY? asks Roy Nabbs

Then why not try one of my very favourite places: the Shropshire hills? Just over an hour and a half away from Leamington, and centred on Church Stretton, are the Long Mynd (Long Mountain) and the Stipperstones range of hills.

Church Stretton is a delightful small town just off the A49 and in a valley between the Long Mynd at 1500 feet and Caer Caradoc at 1400 feet. In the summer there are lovely gardens, many antique emporiums, lots of attractive shops and plenty of good pubs and restaurants. Until 1840 Church Stretton was on the turnpike through the Strettons from Bristol to Chester and was a very important coaching route. As a result of the expansion of the railways and being at the heart of the hills, it has since become a visitor centre.



There are many attractive small churches in the surrounding villages and this picture of the wooden church in Little Stretton won one of our members first prize in a local photographic competition.

Half a mile from the centre of Church Stretton is the beginning of Carding Mill Valley which cuts deep into the Mynd and follows a fast flowing stream for about a mile to other offshoot valleys which take you to the top of the Mynd. The whole of the Mynd area is in the care of the National Trust. In the centre of the valley is an excellent visitor centre and tea rooms in the Edwardian Chalet Pavilion. It also contains a Carbon Challenge experimental display.

In the summer, when the hills are covered in heather, they look like a purple sea. The weekends see numerous walkers booted up to enjoy the wonderful views from the top. You can, of course, reach the top by car but the only road up (and down) is single track with a very steep drop on the one side. There is a shuttle bus from the valley to take you up to the Shooting Box, one of the Bronze Age burial mounds found on the Mynd. It is from there that you can walk along the 5,000 year old ridge called Portway which once carried Neolithic traders high and dry above the then wet and wooded valleys.



Photo. Geoff Pick

PER ARDUA

Our meeting in late November (the final meeting before Christmas) nearly brought with it a disaster, since the booked speaker failed to arrive. Can you imagine the feelings of the organisers, with the audience arriving and the imminent possibility of having to announce that the meeting could not take place?

However, after last-minute consultation with the Staff of the Royal Spa Centre, they were able to dig out a substitute entertainment which proved to be the silent film, "Safety Last", starring Harold Lloyd, issued in 1923. Though members were disappointed at not being able hear the subject they had come to hear, the film proved tremendously enjoyable and many said they had not laughed so much for a long time.



Photograph taken from Google site

Every credit is due to the marvellous staff of the Royal Spa Centre - Peter, Ed and Tom - for the willing help they gave in getting us out of the mire in which we should have been without their assistance, and we offer them our sincere thanks.

The evening was so enjoyable, that perhaps it could become a tradition to show a good old silent film on the final meeting before Christmas, but we should have a real job in finding one more entertaining than "Safety Last"; however it is probably waiting there ready for us to discover it!

WHO ARE YOU?

You have a Halifax account ending in 663

You pay £20 by Standing Order.

The banks won't say! "Data Protection

Please advise Marianne or Val.

NEWS from our local NATIONAL TRUST PROPERTIES

Details are correct as we go to print, but it is advisable to check before making a special journey.

MOSELEY OLD HALL -01902 782808- moseleyoldhall@nationaltrust.org.uk

Moseley Old Hall is starting an exciting new approach to opening in 2014. From 15 February until the 2 November we are open 5 days a week, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. On Mondays and Tuesdays we will be having volunteer room guides, mostly in costume, actually getting on with domestic tasks in the different rooms in the house. So if you want to see writing by quill, bread making or even discover our how to make a pomander come along on a Monday or a Tuesday. As part of this new opening we had a big recruitment drive in January. If you think you would like to join in do get in touch.

In the garden we are just starting turning over a new area to make a small kitchen garden growing a few vegetables and salad for the tearoom – let's hope for some nice weather for growing! Hopefully there will be something to see growing by May or June.

We have also had a bit of rearrangement of the buildings in a way – we have moved our shop and reception into the big barn. This means we have a much bigger shop and the 'old' reception has become a welcome and orientation point for visitors – we may well be selling ice cream from there in the summer too. The second hand books are now in what was the shop and it looks lovely.

Finally, we have had our wedding licence changed so that we can hold weddings in the house – in the garden parlour. This is a much smaller, exclusive, venue for only 20 people, but it is a unique opportunity to get married actually inside a historic house, a house that once saved a king!

PACKWOOD HOUSE – 01564-782024: www.nationaltrust.org.uk/packwood



The new café

After four years of planning and building, we're delighted that the new building is now open, offering a visitor welcome and retail space and the Garden Kitchen café. The income we generate will be used to support vital conservation work in the house, garden and parkland.

Photo: Sally Renwick

Packwood House has been open over winter for the first time, with tours of the house and garden on offer. Last year we also had a very popular display on the tapestries, with demonstrations by the Stratford Guild of Spinners, Weavers and Dyers.

This year we'll be putting the new house interpretation in place, with a closer look at Graham Baron Ash, who gave Packwood to the National Trust, as well as providing more information on the development of the gardens in one of the brick gazebos.

BADDESLEY CLINTON – 01564-783294 - www.nationaltrust.org.uk/baddesleyclinton

Our Victorian Artist programme has been very successful, with the recreation of Rebecca's studio in the Parlour along with information on her painting techniques and materials. We've put out information on the history of the garden in boxes under the benches, and installed a Victorian photographic studio for children to try on Victorian hats and pose for their own portrait in the house. This last one has proved very popular with many posting their pictures on Twitter and Facebook.

This year we continue our closer look at the Victorian Quartet, with information from a recently discovered scrapbook belonging to Edward Dering, and detail from Rebecca's Commonplace book and Marmion's diaries, both held at the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.



Our talks and tours have enjoyed great success, with the introduction of guided collection tours before the house opens on some weekdays. Our event programme has also grown and this year sees our first Jigsaw Festival- a week long event in April selling second hand jigsaws. Our focus for 2014 is on family visitors, with a new family welcome map planned, and on our outdoor offer, making more of the woodland and countryside surrounding us. Our theme in 2014 is 'Coughton at War' – looking at the conflicts which have shaped Coughton's history over the past 600 years.

Events

Spring Garden Festival: 19th April - 20th April 2014

Tours during the Rose Festival.

An RHS Recommended event. Join Head Gardener, Sam Tippens for a guided tour to look at the roses, looking especially at the Rose Labyrinth, rose care, cultivation, companion and underplanting. These tours run twice a day during Coughton's Rose Festival.

25th June - 6th July 2014 Daily tours starting at 12 noon (lasting approximately one and a quarter hours). Full disabled access. RHS members £4, Non-members £5. Please book in advance to avoid disappointment on 07592 775177

Park Check: 11 March. 9am

Join our ranger on the daily park check. This early morning walking tour includes our checks of livestock and fences, giving a great insight in to the operations of the estate. Take the opportunity to reflect on the workings of this great estate and discover some new views as we wake up the estate. Oh and don't forget your camera!
£5 per person. Booking essential on 01789 470 277

Tree Climbing: 14 April and 27 May. 10.30am – 3.30pm

Two highly skilled and friendly instructors can help all ages reach new heights. They will teach you how to enter a tree's canopy using ropes, knots and karabiners, whilst being securely attached in a harness at all times! If you're feeling brave you can take a zip wire back down. £15 per person (1 hour session) plus normal admission.

* Put the date in your diaries - bookings will open soon at <http://bit.ly/BigTreeClimbing> or 0800 055 67 60 *

Run by 'The Great Big Tree Climbing Company' - find out more about them here > <http://www.bigtreeclimbing.co.uk/>

Cadbury Easter Trails: 18 April – 21 April. 11am – 4pm.

This Easter become a Cadbury Eggsplorer! Enjoy a trail through the stunning parkland looking for eggs. Family fun on the paddock in our marquee on all event days.
£2 per trail. Normal admission applies. No need to book, just turn up and join in the fun!

UPTON HOUSE AND GARDENS OX15 6BY 01295 670266
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/uptonhouse

Easter Egg Trail 18-21 April 11 am – 4 pm

There's fun throughout the holidays with a special Cadbury trail over the Easter weekend. Child £2. Normal admission prices apply

Tulips in bloom! Open days in April 11am – 4 pm

See the numerous varieties of tulips in the garden as it is restored to its 1930s splendour. .

Bluebell Tours Sunday May 11 12 noon – 4 pm

Enjoy a guided tour in Blackwell's Wood to see the bluebells. Places limited, timed tickets available on arrival.

Games in the Attic 28 and 30 May 1.30 pm and 3pm.

Discover what fun can be had in the attics at Upton. £5 per child. Booking essential
15

The Italian circular table: Charlecote Drawing Room



Photo: Chris Purvis.

For a number of years this table was hidden behind the door in the Billiard Room where most visitors simply walked past it. It is now in a prominent position in the Drawing Room where our visitors' attention can more easily be drawn to it. There are five pictures of Roman Ruins set within a malachite border: Roman Forum, Arch of Constantine, Coliseum, Temple of Vesta and Pantheon

From the Drawing Room - Len Mullenger