



"Apparently, the bloke next door is an old Bond villain!"

Cartoon laughs



"Oh no, it's my dad!"



"Is it me or is Terry batting way out of his league?"

By Susie Kearley

THIS month marks 125 years since The National Trust was founded.

In that time they've acquired over 500 historic properties with parks and gardens, including nine lighthouses, 56 villages, 39 pubs and a gold mine. They also own 250,000 hectares of British countryside.

The Trust was founded in 1895 to preserve farms, parks and landscapes, ensuring unrestricted access to beautiful places, for people from all walks of life.

The founders were Octavia Hill, Robert Hunter and Canon Harwicke Rawnsley, who were all passionate about preserving the natural world for future generations.

Octavia Hill was a social reformer who provided social housing and work opportunities for the poor.

She felt strongly that open spaces should be accessible for all and argued for London's green spaces to "be kept for the enjoyment, refreshment, and rest of those who have no country house".

Robert Hunter was a lawyer who donated his legal skills to the cause and Canon Harwicke Rawnsley was a Lake District clergyman and keen environmentalist.

Today, the Trust protects special places, while providing education and insight into the UK's colourful social history.

The country houses which visitors back to different periods in time, telling stories and exploring the lives of those who once lived there.

Meanwhile the landscapes evolve, affected by coastal erosion, conservation activities, recreation, and the effects of climate change.

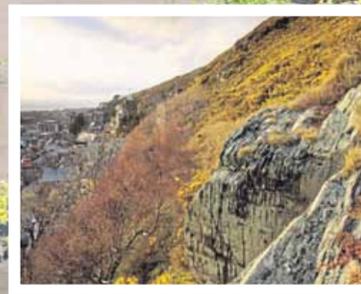
The Trust tries to cater for people's modern lifestyles and interests, while staying true to their principles of heritage, conservation, and preservation.

Their first acquisition was a five-acre area of cliff top at Dinas Oleu in Wales, which was donated to them within weeks of The National Trust being registered under the Company's Act.

Since then, they've acquired 780 miles of coastland all around the UK and they're still working to protect that land today.

The Trust's primary interest was always in preserving landscapes and gardens, but they soon started to show an interest in saving historic properties, too.

How this Trust grew into our National treasure



In 1896 they bought Alfriston Clergy House in Sussex for £10, which is about £600 in today's money.

It was another three years before they acquired their first nature reserve, buying two acres of Wicken Fen, near Cambridge.

They've since acquired 1,941 acres of Wicken Fen, which is now the most species-rich area of the UK. Cranes, Norfolk hawkers and otters now live there, along with 188 endangered species. Last year, common cranes started successfully breeding at Wicken.

In 1902 the National Trust acquired Brandelhow Park Estate in Derwentwater, following an appeal to raise £6,500 to pay for it. It was their first major appeal.

In 1907 they acquired Barrington Court, a Tudor Manor House in Somerset. However, the maintenance and restoration costs for this property were a huge drain on finances, so they didn't buy another country house for over 30 years.

In 1912 they acquired

Blakeney Point in Norfolk for its value as a coastal nature reserve and in 1923, they were gifted Great Gable, a peak in the Lake District.

It was donated by the Fell and Rock Climbing Club as a memorial to members who had been killed in the Great War.

It was 1934 when West Wycombe became the first village placed under National Trust protection.

In the mid-20th Century, the National Trust started adding to its property portfolio again, driven by a dramatic decline in the fortunes of the wealthy and the subsequent loss of many country homes.

By this time, the role of country estates was starting to change. Their historic position as respected employers, at the heart of communities, providing work and a social structure, was evolving.

Many farmers wanted to farm their own land, not be hired labourers on someone else's estate. People whose families had always worked in domestic service wanted to

pursue careers as secretaries, shop assistants or factory workers in the towns and cities.

The agricultural depression of the 1870s, combined with a poor economy, and two world wars saw a decline in fortunes of the wealthy.

Urban sprawl had spoilt the countryside views that many estates had previously enjoyed. Land owners with numerous houses started to sell off some homes and be more frugal with their money.

After the First World War taxes increased for the wealthy, and incomes from rent fell, as many of the men who had previously worked on the farms had been killed.

Bereaved families moved away to the towns and cities, where accommodation was cheaper and a wider variety of work was available.

Country houses were demolished to make way for urban developments, and landscapes across the UK changed.

As so many important historic properties

disappeared from the countryside, the government took action. The National Trust Act of 1937 was passed, allowing tax-free gifts of country estates to be given to the Trust.

When Beatrix Potter died in 1943, she left 14 farms to the Trust, as well as 4,000 acres of land.

Many owners of country estates started to follow suit, leaving their family inheritance of land and property to the charity, because the upkeep of these great estates was becoming increasingly unaffordable.

The rate of demolition and abandonment of country houses slowed during the Second World War because many great homes were used as military barracks, hospitals, or homes for evacuee children.

Then in 1946 the National Land Fund was established as a memorial to people killed during the Second World War.

The fund provided financial assistance, enabling many country houses to be given to the National Trust.

The first property passed to the Trust under this arrangement was Cotehele. Land values were capped the following year, by the Town and Country Planning Act.

This meant the land around country houses was given a nominal value as agricultural land, and was not given a premium value to reflect its development potential.

However, in the years that followed, levels of demolition and abandonment escalated. Throughout the 1950s one country house a week was demolished because the owners couldn't afford the upkeep.

The National Trust stepped in to save some of the most important historic buildings. Fenton House in London was bequeathed to the National Trust in 1952 by Lady Binning. Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire was bequeathed to the National Trust in 1957 by James de Rothschild.

In 1965 the Trust launched the Neptune Campaign, to protect our coasts. The fundraising for this campaign

■ **Main pic: Hill Top, Cumbria, home of Beatrix Potter** (© National Trust Images/James Dobson). **Below (from left): a row of houses in West Wycombe Village, Buckinghamshire, which comprises examples from the 16th to 18th Centuries** (© National Trust Images/Rupert Truman); **the gorse-covered cliffs of Dinas Oleu, rising behind Barmouth, Gwynedd** (© National Trust Images/ Joe Cornish); **NT co-founder Octavia Hill** (© National Trust Images); **NT omega sign for Brandelhow on the Western bank of Derwentwater, Lake District** (©National Trust Images/Paul Harris).

enabled the charity to purchase 574 miles of British coastline, making a significant contribution to the vast swathes of coastal landscapes that they manage and protect today.

A more recent campaign is Save Our Seabirds From Invasive Predators, a partnership between the RSPB, the National Trust and the National Trust for Scotland.

The aim is to protect seabird eggs from predators on small British islands. Wardens ensure that boats and visitors do not bring predators on to the islands, and if any do get through, they aim to detect them and respond quickly.

The Trust continues to protect important landscapes and historic places, but they're having to be more selective about accepting historic properties than they might have been in the past.

While at one time the charity would purchase historic houses of great importance, today with escalating costs and limited funds, they will usually only accept historic buildings that are donated with a substantial dowry for their upkeep. They are also quite selective about what they'll accept.

In recent times, they have announced a return to their focus on landscapes, saying they will not be rescuing as many country homes as they have in the past.

This is because of the spiralling costs of repair and maintenance. Their return to a focus on landscapes and conservation reflects takes them back to their roots – caring for beautiful places in the great outdoors, providing access to everyone, regardless of their income, class, or position in society.



Friend turned failure into triumph

THE friend who took our windfall apples to make cider came round with a couple of bottles and an apology.

His first attempt had ended in failure. On the plus side he has made a lot of excellent cider vinegar.

I have already used it twice in salad dressings and it also gave a lovely subtle tang to gravy for Sunday's pork roast.

The vinegar will last far longer than any cider and at least those apples haven't gone to waste.

Nothing artistic in my untidy chair

HUSBAND Tom is a tidy person, unlike his wife. However I keep my clutter in bounds. In the study it's all on my barely-visible desk. Upstairs it is a gravity-defying tower on the bedroom chair.

That's where I put the previous day's clothes, my hairdryer, handbag, make up bag and other life essentials. The chair is never, ever sat upon.

Years ago, artist Tracey Emin made headlines with her controversial installation My Bed. Neither my life nor my creation comes remotely close in terms of chaos. Nonetheless to Tom this piece of our furniture is always "Tracey's Chair".

Deaf to daughter's good advice



■ **Sven Nordin plays William Wisting.**

I ENJOY a good Scandi-noir thriller and BBC Four's Wisting fits the bill perfectly.

The stark beauty of the snowy Norwegian landscape is a definite attraction. The incongruous addition of the FBI adds a fascinating twist.

It was daughter Sophie, 22, who hit on a more pragmatic appeal though: the subtitles.

I know she's right. I do struggle to hear a lot of TV dialogue. Her suggestion that I have my hearing tested though is currently falling on deaf ears.

Having nightmares about cheese

CHEESE gives me indigestion and now that I am avoiding it I realise it is everywhere.

In one shop I couldn't buy a ready-made ham sandwich without cheese. In a cafe I had to send back my tuna panini because, unannounced, it had melted cheese throughout.

Even a beef casserole at a pub came with a thick blanket of cheese. Who puts cheese on beef casserole? We get cheese on chips, cheese on shepherd's pie, even cheese on fish pie. At 3am the morning after, it really is the stuff of nightmares.

No fooling over date of birthday

FOR once I remembered my nephew Jamie's birthday. On January 25 he will get his card on time. His dad points out that this is Burns Night and ought to be memorable.

Well, yes and no. Some of us don't realise Burns Night is upon us until Burns Day when haggis seems to be everywhere. By then it is too late to pop something in the post.

A memorable birthday is one immediately after a significant event. My friend Jane for example always gets a card from me. I doubt that's the main reason she is glad she was born on April 2 though, and not a day earlier!