

TANT

TENANTS ASSOCIATION OF THE NATIONAL TRUST

## TANT Newsletter— Chat from the Chairman

### IN OCTAVIA'S FOOTSTEPS

We have always felt that The Trust's great founder and Social Reformer Octavia Hill would have an affinity with our work and achievements. In her Centenary Year the Octavia Hill Society Chairman, Peter Clayton is the speaker at our AGM at Lacock on April 1st. He's a lively and interesting story teller and we are cutting the formal business to a minimum to give him plenty of space. It's not to be missed and will turn out to be an important event in the National Trust's year too.

We carry on independently and effectively in influencing the Trust's Let Estate

policies and representing the shorter-term concerns of Tenant-Custodians nationally. As we do so the need for more resources grows. It's not just money we need, or backroom work, but the way we function and the way we are growing needs ever more professional input.

Legal, Media and Administration input are high on our list of needs. We would like to train more people to run our helpline from home and others to become part-time trouble-shooters. Visiting National Trust tenanted homes or an estate perhaps to help set up a new local association is a vital part of our everyday work which is carried out voluntarily by our group members. It's ever more important

as the Trust's new localism policy unfolds, and concerns and problems on both sides are often resolved with our intervention. We know that among the 10,000 Tenant-Custodians and others there will be the people who can give us a bit of their ability to back our work. It brings really satisfying results (and the Trust realise too) that benefits Tenant-Custodians *and* the National Trust.

Meet us at the AGM; contact me personally on 07741053764, text, leave a voice message, contact us on the helpline or by email: [info@tantuk.org](mailto:info@tantuk.org)

Andrew Turner – Cross, Chairman

### Development Officer's Report

The Trust is justly proud of its mission statement – "FOREVER FOR EVERYONE" – but when it comes to people's homes and holiday cottages should it now read FOREVER FOR EVERYONE WHO IS BETTER OFF?

TANT believes that the Trust already has sufficient holiday cottages. A significant proportion are expensive and beyond the reach of many working families. In some parts of the country the cottages appear to be under utilised. More realistic initial pricing structures would make the cottages more cost effective for the Trust by increasing the number of lettings each year and to help it fulfil its primary purpose.

Likewise, in some areas, we see that Trust managers are seeking rent levels for normal house lettings that are far

higher than existing rent levels for similar properties and way beyond the reach of ordinary NT tenants including people whose families have lived in those communities for several generations. It seems that being professional and sustaining communities have been pushed aside in the rush for commercialism by maximising rent levels. This is a dangerous road for a Charity based on the inclusive principles of its founders as many local people are now being forced out of their communities. TANT will continue to press for affordable rents for local people who are part of and contribute to their local communities.

In some regions the Trust is making headway in their duty to provide warm, safe, dry homes for their tenants. But much remains to be done. Some long

term tenants have what are known as Protected Tenancies which give security of tenure. We would like to see the principle of longer term tenancy agreements extended to many more tenants who have proved themselves to be good custodians of the historic buildings which are their homes. Likewise we favour tenant involvement in the management of their estates as volunteers and TANT will continue to promote this concept.

TANT officers work on a voluntary basis across a broad range of issues affecting tenants and are always glad to hear new ideas, concerns and comments on our activity.

Peter Bate. Development Officer.

## TANT AGM

### Sunday 1st April 2012

*Sunday 1st. April 2012  
Manger Barn, Abbey Road, Lacock,  
Wiltshire SN15 2LG*

*Coffee at 10.30 a.m. with the AGM starting at 11.00 a.m. Free buffet lunch to follow afterwards.*

*Guest Speaker Peter Clayton of the Octavia Hill Society.*

*Lacock is situated 3 miles south of Chippenham, near M4 Junction 17. The Manger Barn is located in the centre of Lacock village, near to The Stables National Trust Tea Room and The Red Lion Inn. Parking is in the main village car park, which is signposted.*

*All National Trust Tenant Custodians are invited and urged to attend. If you would like to attend but are unable to do*

*so because the distance is too great or for any other reason please advise the TANT Vice-Chairman, Leo Stevens, by email on [ls.tant@gmx.com](mailto:ls.tant@gmx.com) Telephone 01249 730037 or Mobile 0771 280 9644. The same applies if you would like any questions to be addressed in your absence*

## Octavia Hill and Her Legacy



It is no surprise that Octavia Hill became one of the 19<sup>th</sup> century's leading social reformers nor that she would form a legacy that was for the good of all. Her parents John and Caroline instilled in their children a sense of social responsibility through their own example. John Hill, a prosperous corn merchant and former banker, established his own newspaper dedicated to telling "The Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth" and in so doing attacked corruption and self-interest groups. Caroline Hill as well as bearing a number of children (of which Octavia was the 8<sup>th</sup> and one of five sisters) ran an infant school, which doubled in the evening as a community centre for the education and recreation of adults. Today the school, as part of the Angles Theatre, continues this work by encouraging local participation and audiences through its productions.

By 1840, Octavia's mother was forced to move her children to Finchley following her husband's bankruptcy. In those days Finchley was a rural area

and here Octavia developed a love of the countryside and country pursuits that informed her later philosophies. During this troubling time of her life Octavia found comfort in her rural surroundings and perhaps that's why she later felt that access to the countryside was vital to city dwellers. Another influence on Octavia's thinking was her maternal grandfather, Dr. Thomas Southwood Smith who tirelessly campaigned for better living conditions for poor people. When, in 1851, the family moved into London, Octavia was horrified by the terrible poverty and the harsh environment in which so many were forced to live. Being the kind of woman she was and with the example of closest relatives, it is no wonder she set about trying to change things.

With the help of friends such as John Ruskin, Octavia was able to get together enough funding to begin to implement her theories and she soon became a moving force behind the development of social housing. During her lifetime she formed the Horace Street Trust, which became a model for many subsequent housing associations. She recognised the importance of enhancing the lives of tenants by providing community amenities: meetings halls, savings clubs and dramatic productions in addition to well maintained housing. Octavia Hill had people and their needs at the heart of all her thinking. She and her assistants knew their tenants personally and encouraged them to better themselves. Her quest to provide affordable housing to low and middle-income city residents is still something that preoccupies councils up and down Britain today.

Octavia Hill did not just look to the future; she was also keen to preserve land and property from the past. She was acutely aware that cities were spreading and that the industrial revolution posed a threat to green spaces and ancient buildings. She was the first to use the term "Green Belt" for London and in 1895 she purchased Alfriston Clergy House, marking the beginning of the National Trust's building conservation work. But her overriding concern was always for the preservation of natural spaces which she believed provided the life-enhancing virtue of 'pure earth, clean air and blue sky'. She was above all a champion of rural protection, prophetic in saying: 'Keep those fair, fair, still places for your children and your children's children, if you can: for the more cities increase, the more precious they will be.'

In 1907, Parliament passed the first 'National Trust Act' formalising the work of Octavia and her colleagues, amongst them her sister Miranda, founder of the Kryle Society. The legislation laid out the National Trust's purpose and gave it unique powers to protect property forever, for the benefit of the nation. The Trust now looks after a huge portfolio of countryside, coast line and properties. A substantial number of the properties are tenanted and much of the land worked by tenant farmers, perpetuating Octavia Hill's housing legacy. Many tenants are also helping to keep alive Octavia Hill's determination to provide open spaces for people's enjoyment, habitats for wildlife and our treasured rural way of life – "for ever, for everyone"

Cristina George

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## TANT Contact Details

You may contact TANT Committee members as follows:

- Andrew Turner-Cross, Chairman (07741) 053 764
- Peter Bate, Development Officer (01643) 704 063
- Linda Baharier, Treasurer (07815) 842 133
- Alan Limb, Secretary (07717) 823 101

To help TANT, would you consider making a donation/ subscription? £10 per household & £5 concessions.

If so please send your payment made out to TANT to:

Linda Baharier, 1 Castlehill Cottages, Outwood Lane, Bletchingley, Surrey RH1 4LR with your details or make payment to our bank: Natwest a/c no 75514834 Sort Code 60-16-09

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## TANT Insurance Cover

TANT has organised insurance with Hiscox that covers Local National Trust Tenant Associations as well as TANT overall. The insurance consists of cover for Public Liability and other claims that could be made against individuals by virtue of their role for TANT or a Local Association.

The cover has been organised with the help of Gordon Harris, an insurance professional and TANT member, who lives at Holnicote. Gordon's input is much appreciated.

You can find full details of the cover on the TANT website. If you have any queries in connection with the cover, please email them to [alimb@briuk.co.uk](mailto:alimb@briuk.co.uk)

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