

THE NATIONAL TRUST

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Part 1

Hi. good morning, everyone. Welcome to Reading and to something about the National Trust. *This is a new machine, let's see if I can make it work as well as I want. Hopefully.* Well after the introduction I will talk a bit about populations and land ownership, I'll give you the history of the Trust, something about its funding and its work force and look at the situation in the 21st century.

Now I think you have done a bit of preparation about the Trust, have you? Yes, you've looked at the website, yes - excellent, good O.K. This is a rather an odd sort of name, national is perhaps clear enough although the Trust that I am talking about relates to England and Wales, and Northern Ireland, not Scotland. There is a separate National Trust for Scotland, very similar to the National Trust, founded a few years later. Trust means keeping, looking after, for other people in this case, looking after things for the whole nation. I'll come back to the outline so if you haven't got it all, there will be another chance.

So what is the National Trust? It's a non-government organisation staffed by paid employees and volunteers so it's not government. Many people think that it is, especially perhaps because of the name but it is an independent organisation funded by charity donations, I will come back to that. Now what is its purpose? Its purpose is the permanent preservation for the benefit of the nation of land of natural beauty and interest, and buildings of historic or architectural importance. What does all that mean? The permanent preservation, so looking after for ever. Making sure things are safe, in good condition for ever, for the benefit of the nation, for everybody's enjoyment. It says for the benefit of the nation, but you are welcome too. So it's not just for me and other English or Welsh or Northern Ireland people, it's actually for everybody.

What are we trying to preserve? What are we trying to look after? We are trying to look after land, land of natural beauty so - woodland, rivers, mountains, lakes, the sea shore, - all this natural land because it is beautiful and also because it is interesting. Now round the country there are so-called sites of scientific interest. Perhaps there is one place, one bit of woodland let's say where a particular bird lives. And that bird doesn't live anywhere else. Or another place, a meadow, a field where a particular flower blossoms, and it only flowers there, or a particular insect lives. So the Trust will try to look after that area so that that bird, or flower or insect won't die out. The Trust also looks after buildings of historic or architectural importance, or attractiveness. Historic importance that's famous people lived in the building, so it's interesting to see where a famous person, a writer or an artist or a politician, general of the army or navy lived. Or/and the building is very interesting in terms of the history of buildings. How it is designed, what it looks like and perhaps also because of its contents, its furniture, its paintings and so on.

Now, just let's look – I've got some of your countries here, not all – as a sort of background to what the National Trust is doing. The United Kingdom has, well, approx 57 million inhabitants. It's quite a small country and it's quite densely populated as you are aware especially in this area. I've got Taiwan, perhaps some of you are from there, also a small country. Portugal, Afghanistan, now I think some of you are from Saudi Arabia – a small population. Now apologies if the figures aren't quite right. If you look at the different sources you get a little bit of difference. So if you take Saudi Arabia, just after half way down. By international standards a small population with a big country. If we take China – a big population, the biggest, but also a very big country.

OK that puts Britain in context. Do you know who owns the land in your countries? Do you know, is it all the government or is it other kinds of people? Let's look at Britain – who owns Britain? I've got the whole of Britain here not just England. The figures are about, well, 10 years old – I haven't managed to sort out more recent ones. Foreigners own a lot of this country. So they are the biggest group of people. You can buy land here, you can own a bit of this country if you want to. There is no obstacle to that. Aristocrats, that's nobles, dukes and duchesses, people from very grand perhaps old families whose families have got land, say, from the king or the queen centuries ago, they are the next biggest group of owners. Some of them own huge amounts of land, 5,000, 10,000 acres. Acres is the normal unit of measurement, don't ask me now what it is you can work it out if you are not sure later. So still a lot of people from many centuries ago own a lot of land. Then we have the Forestry Commission. That is a government unit, so it plants forests to get wood, it owns a lot of the country. The National Trust is the fourth biggest owner, so acquiring over 110 years a lot of land. The Ministry of Defence, the government owns a lot of land for army practice. Water companies have a lot, the Crown Estate, that's now the Queen, so whoever is the monarch has a lot of land. Then the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, that's an organisation which is committed to ensuring that all the different kinds of birds that live here continue to live here. Then the church, the Church of England owns a lot.

Part 2

So the National Trust is the fourth biggest landowner, what does it own? Now again the figures may not quite match because they are from different sources but you get the general idea I think, it owns a lot of land. It owns a lot of the coastline. Now Britain is a collection of islands so there is a lot of coast and the Trust owns quite a good chunk of it. It owns a lot of ancient monuments like Stonehenge or old churches or castles which are in ruins, so some very, very ancient places, some not so ancient but ruins. It owns over 200 houses, historic houses mostly big ones, I will come back to them. It owns a lot of gardens, many of the gardens are connected to houses but not all of them. In some cases the National Trust owns a garden, there is a house but that is still in private hands.

It owns mills, mills where corn was ground to make flour. It owns some pubs, some historic pubs I think they are all in Northern Ireland. It owns some churches some of which still function as churches, some of which don't, but they're typically of interest architecturally. It owns dovecots. Who knows what a

dove is? What is a dove? It's a kind of bird, another name for it? Pigeon, a 'cot' a little place where it lived. In the winter in the past people didn't have so much to eat they often had to slaughter, kill-off cows and sheep and pigs because it was too expensive to feed them over the winter, fresh meat could be obtained from doves or pigeons.

The Trust owns complete farms, it owns villages and it owns some factories, some historic factories, perhaps the first factories in Britain, in the world, to produce cotton goods for example. It owns prisons, the particular name being workhouses to, well, 150 years ago. If you were poor, had no work, had no money you'd be put into something called the workhouse and made to work. Men in one part, women in another, and children in another. Effectively prisons. The National Trust owns one of these. It's a beautiful building but very sad lives were lived there in the past.

The Trust also owns small town houses. It owns the houses where two of the Beatles lived. I am sure you have heard of the Beatles? A pop group, so John Lennon's house and Paul McCartney's house are owned by the National Trust. They are very ordinary houses, I grew up in a house like that, but now these are open as, if you like, museums.

Now in the last census 2001, the population of Britain came out as 57 million. We have a census every 10 years or on the 01 - I think that's right, the 01 anyway. Now if we go back to 1800 there were 8.9 million people in this country, 50 years later it had doubled and for the first time more people lived in the town than in the countryside. Now agriculture in history has always been very important in this country but in the 19th c industry became very important too. As you know the Industrial Revolution began here in England. This was the first country to build factories, to produce goods in a modern way, with machines rather than people doing the heavy work. Of course in the early days we produced, well, we took cotton from other countries, materials from other countries, made goods in our factories and exported them again. Now of course your countries can make these things in your countries.

We are looking here at 1900 population doubled again, it's not increasing so much these days but well - I've given the current figures. But the key thing is 'what was happening in the 19th century?' In the 19th century an increase in population, people going to cities, people working in factories and working long hours, people worked much longer hours in the past. They worked six days a week, they didn't have a long weekend as we do. Many people now work 35 hours a week, then they'd be working 60, 70 hours a week. That's leaving in the morning, in the winter in the dark, working inside a dark factory, coming home in the dark, so never getting out. Never seeing much beyond their work.

So during the 19th century, as industrialization continued many people began to get rather worried, worried for a number of reasons about what was happening. First of all they thought - if we're not careful all of England, in particular, will be covered in factories. There won't be any land, any countryside left. England would be one big, steamy, smelly, cold, dirty, well sometimes very hot factory - what will happen to the countryside? In particular, people were worried about 'common land'. Now over the centuries in villages there has always been some land which is for everybody. Nobody owns it, everybody can use it. An ordinary

person can keep his one cow there. People can play football there. But during the 19th century the government authorities began to turn a blind eye in somebody put a fence around the common land, and said 'now it's mine I want it, so it's mine'. So some people campaigned saying 'No, no we must keep this common land. We must have open spaces, we must have footpaths through the countryside where everybody can walk to enjoy the light, the air, the scenery.

Part 3

Some people were worried just on legal terms, some were worried that too many people never got out into the fresh air, never got out into the woods and fields to hear the birds, look at the flowers etc. Other people were concerned about ancient buildings, there are many ancient buildings still in this country - old castles, old churches all kinds of places. But because many were in ruins they were getting pulled down to make way for factories. So people who were interested in architecture, history and art more generally, said 'No, no we must keep these old buildings, they are part of our history, part of our culture, they musn't be pulled down. In 1889 the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds - I'm not particularly a bird lover but this is important - said 'we have lots of lovely birds, birds need space, birds need fresh air we must look after them'. In all these cases, certainly the first two, people were concerned to get Protection Orders so that land, monuments could not be taken down. They didn't actually own them though.

So 1895 the National Trust was founded. With the purpose, as I showed you earlier, of protecting land and buildings, with a more general purpose, so the Trust is not only interested in birds, or only interested in ancient monuments or only interested in footpaths and open land. It is interested in all of this. From the beginning the idea was that this organisation called the National Trust would buy land, would be a land owner. Would not just try to get parliament to say 'Yes these monuments must be protected'. The Trust would be the owner of the monuments, the Trust would be the owner of land which was beautiful or whatever. So that it could look after it.

So it was founded in 1895, so that is what a 112 years ago with 100 members and it had £300 as income. This was worth more then than it does now. Three people were particularly important, a woman called Octavia Hill. Prior to being involved with the National Trust her interests were in housing for poor people. She was middl- class, not rich but she was very concerned about people living in London in particular not having places for the children to play, not having places for adults to walk or enjoy themselves. Sir Robert Hunter was an accountant, that was very useful, he lived in Surrey, that's near Berkshire, a bit like Berkshire, near London, attractive countryside. He was getting worried about all the people living there - a big increase of population because with the railways people could live outside London but commute into London so he thought well where he lived was just going to become one big suburb. Not just one factory but a big suburb. Hardwicke Rawnsley, he was a Canon, he was in the Church of England, a priest. He lived in the Lake District, have you heard of the Lake District? It's in the north-west of England, it's a very beautiful area with lots of lakes and mountains and where poets like Wordsworth and Coleridge and others lived , and wrote poems which are very popular about the wild daffodils and flowers. So a lovely

area, sort of a quiet area. However the railway was bringing lots of people to it and again Hardwicke Rawnsley was afraid that it would get spoilt. Too many railway lines, too many roads. People coming and walking and poiling particular areas.

So in various ways they had their concerns about what was happening to the countryside. Now they were very energetic and in 1907 the National Trust Act of Parliament was passed which said that any property and particularly what the National Trust owned, was a permanent possession, nothing could happen to it. Nobody including the government could take it away. So if the government decided it wanted to build a road or an airport on National Trust land, well it couldn't, because that land had to be kept. Now in the early days, well for a long time, the Trust particularly focused on land. Whether inland or with forest, or mountains or whatever. They bought one or two smallish buildings and one large one. But on the whole the focus was not on buildings especially not large ones. However.....

Part 4

Just before the Second world War, and another Act of Parliament was passed to enable the Trust to acquire a lot of very large country houses. Now many people say this is one of the great glories of Britain, England in particular. The fine big houses, now some of you may think they are palaces or something say for a monarch or a nobleman but not necessarily. Some aren't in fact so huge, but they are very attractive houses with fine furniture and paintings and contents, and lovely gardens usually which were often the centre of a small region. The people living round would work in the house if various capacities or on the farm attached to the house. So these houses were the centre of a whole complex of people.

Now after the First World War and up to the Second World War these houses experienced a lot of problems because of the wars women in particular could find work in the factories or fighting, they didn't want to work in these houses any more, they didn't want to work as servants. The houses were rather expensive to look after and when the owner died he typically had to pay a lot of money in tax because the house was very valuable - as a property and because of its contents. But the owner did not actually have any money. Very often the owners had no cash, they just had this wonderful asset, and it was a problem. Through discussions with the government it was agreed that these houses, their contents and gardens were a wonderful resource, and the government would pass them on to the National Trust or even enable the owners to live in them and not pay taxes. And not pay taxes when one owner dies and his son or daughter took over. So the Trust started acquiring a lot of houses and you saw on my list earlier that the Trust has 200 houses not all enormous ones.

In 1947 a garden was given to the Trust by the American owner. It's a very beautiful garden in the west of England, a very, very popular place to visit. In 1965 we had Enterprise Neptune - who knows who Neptune is? He's a god, the god of the sea and this was an enterprise or project to try and enable the National Trust to own more coastline. Now in many countries, you can't - ordinary people

can't walk along by the sea shore because it is owned by a private person. We feel in this country, well, we all own the sea, we all ought to be able to walk beside it. The National Trust wanted to buy more and more of it, so everybody could walk there.

Now the 1980s, the National Trust had one million members. So up from 100 in 1895 to 1 million 85 years later. Then in the centenary year we had 2.25, soon after 3 million, 2006, 3.4 million members and I looked at the website yesterday and it still says 3.4 million members. That's a big jump, it's a big jump from the foundation, but it's a big jump in recent years. I think there are two reasons one is that again people and this time more people are worried about the loss of the land, the loss of countryside. Not because of factories, because of more building of houses, the spread of towns, the spread of suburbs. So we feel Britain, sorry England, that's the south of England where we all are is going to be one big suburb with lots of roads and big shopping complexes. So we want that to stop.

And also it is more of a leisure society, people don't work such long hours, people had a bit more money, or a lot of people do, and they like to spend their free time in the countryside and/or visiting the country houses. So they think 'let's join', the National Trust is a good thing because it looks after our land, a lot of our land and it looks after these lovely old houses. So we'll become members and it'll will be cheaper. *I am muddling up my*

So how is the Natural Trust funded?

Part 5

If you want to go into one of the houses you have to pay. If you just want to walk in the countryside owned by the Trust then you don't have to pay, it's free. You can go there or walk along by the seaside, by the seashore, that's free. But if you go into a house you have to pay. Because it takes a lot of money to look after the houses. Or you can be a member, 3.4 million people are members, so you pay so much a year, so much for life, then when you visit its free. People give money and they give properties, or they give objects. Or when they die they give paintings, perhaps before they die, or silver, porcelain, valuable things. Legacies, that's when people die - yes, they leave money, or goods or property to the Trust.

There are sales, most of the houses have a shop, and there are restaurants. Usually very good restaurants. Another attraction, say people go out on a Sunday afternoon to one of the houses and have tea, have a nice English tea, so that makes money. Then we have appeals, that is for something special. So a few years ago the highest mountain in Wales, Snowdon, was for sale, part of it was for sale. This mountain had been owned by a private individual, I can't remember if he died or what, but it was up for sale. So the Trust thought 'right, yes we should have this mountain so that everybody can come. So. Now Sir Anthony Hopkins, a famous film actor who's from Wales headed an appeal to raise money. 'Give some money to the Trust, £1.00, £50.00 whatever, and we can own this mountain, and that was successful. So this sort of thing happens from time to time.

So properties, land, houses etc. are obtained by the Trust, by the Trust purchasing them, out of its normal income, its funds, or through an appeal, or people give their properties outright, or through negotiation with the government as tax

relief. Now a common joke in this country is 'oh ho when I die my house will go to the National Trust, - they can have it'. Perhaps the National Trust won't want your house, perhaps it's not interesting, and that's the case. So if anybody wants to give their house then it has to be checked very carefully. What is interesting about it - why would other people want to come and look at it, why would other people pay money to come in and look at it? And how much will it cost to look after this house, how much will it cost to preserve it? Some places need a lot of money, buildings in particular are expensive to look after. Land is expensive to maintain. If you've got lots of people walking on it there's degradation that needs to be taken into account.

So who does do all of this? What is the work force? Well of course there are paid directors, and national regional administrators. There are paid land wardens. It must be quite a nice job if you like the outdoors, to go walking in your area in the countryside every day to check - whether the birds are happy, the same sort of birds are still there. Whether the animals are still there. Whether the flowers are flowering properly and so on. Whether there is enough water in the river. There are paid house managers and the people who work in the shops and the restaurant and the gardeners are all paid. So about 6,000 paid staff. Well that's what it says on the website the other day.

Volunteers, well you find different numbers for volunteers. You can find much higher numbers, I will explain that in a second. But - and that's what I am. So I am not paid for what I do for the National Trust, and I act as a Room Steward. But other people are volunteers, and they help in the gardens or they help with family events and so on. You could be a volunteer. You could come and have a holiday with the National Trust as we have what we call Acorn Camps. They're a week. and you stay in a National Trust place, perhaps an old barn that's been converted on a farm. You get all your food and obviously your bed, but during the day you do work. Perhaps you work, maybe cutting down some dead trees, or planting some new trees. Or you clear a pond, perhaps there are too many plants in the ponds, the water is not healthy. Something like that. So you are doing physical work with other people. It can be good fun, for a week out in the fresh air. So if we add that sort of volunteer it would increase the number. The number there refers to regular volunteers.

When I was young and I first came to Reading I worked outside. I belonged to something called the Reading Young National Trust. On Saturdays and Sundays, not every week, we went out and cleared ponds, that's fun, really dirty and messy. We put special clothes on, and squelched through the water to clear it, it was good fun. Sometimes we camped over the weekend. But then one day I found I had cut down the wrong tree - so oh dear. So I turned to working inside houses. Now I like history, I like old things, I like beautiful things. So - actually I work in 3 different houses.

Part 6

Now, in two of them, there were owners of attractive houses. One is relatively small, and everybody who visits says 'oh, I could live here'. Dates from about the 14th century, but it's been modified over the years. The family who last owned it had four children, but none of them wanted the responsibility of looking after

such an old place, too much worry. They did look after it, but now, the family has either died or moved on, now in fact the trust is going to spend £ 2 million fixing the electricity, the water, various basic things in a house, which haven't been looked after for thirty years. So, it's costing a lot of money. But that family left money in trust in the bank to raise money to do that repair.

Another place that I went to was, is bigger. It was quite important in the Second World War, there were American troops and officers there, preparing some of the manoeuvres in the Second World War. After then, well it was in a rather rough state, some of the soldiers had practiced shooting the statues in the garden, and caused some disrepair, so the house was in a sad state. A couple bought it. They didn't have any children. They spent their money and attention bringing this house back to life. They've got lots of fine furniture and paintings very cheaply because nobody else wanted such big pieces of furniture in the 1950s after the Second World War. so now the house looks as though people have always live there, and again, people like visiting.

The other place I live, I work at, is huge, it's 17th century and it has almost not been changed because the owners had other houses where they lived, so there's this lovely house, it's quite dark and there are secret passages and corridors, secret staircases, it's quite easy to get lost there. What I like has been behind the scenes, so the visitors see the nice clean tidy rooms but I can also go through the door which says 'Private', and investigate other parts of this lovely old house.

My job there is twofold, on the one hand so I stand perhaps near the door, I have my badge of course. As you come in, I'll say, 'good afternoon' 'welcome'. I shouldn't really say any more, because you may not want to talk to me. As you look, you may have bought the guide book and I am watching you as you look around. What do you think I'm watching you for? (student) Absolutely, so you don't touch anything because even if you are not going to steal it, we all have grease on our hands, dust, so if something has lasted from 1700 to now, we want it to last longer so we don't want you to touch it. If we touch it we have a special gloves on, so I'm watching you don't touch, you don't break anything - or perhaps take anything. Apparently that works because the police tell us that because there is someone in the room with the badge standing, they aren't the thefts that might be expected because there are lots of little things around, that might be nice.

But I'm also there to answer questions, so people could say 'what's that?' so I will say, 'well, that is a very rare Chinese cup from 1200, and they will say 'oh thank you very much'. British people though, are afraid to ask questions, they don't like to shout, sometimes if they have got children, if the child asks, then the mother or father will say 'ask the lady'. So I'm 'the lady' and they might ask me. Sometimes people talk in loud voices - 'I wonder what that is? Sometimes they expect me to hear so I say 'oh well that is' but occasionally people have loud voices and they're talking and I say 'oh perhaps' - 'oh what are you talking to us for?' - they expect me to be invisible.

Sometimes we have a problem because there is a group of people, that's somebody's taking his or her friends round and they'll look at a picture - and this has happened - and say 'Henry VIII, famous king who had 6 wives'. So somebody will say well that's Henry VIII and that's his first wife Anne Boleyn. That's his 4th

wife Katherine of Aragon and my but we musn't say 'ahem, no you're wrong.' This is this because it will make the person who is talking look stupid. So you sometimes have to listen to things which are completely wrong but if they don't ask me I shouldn't tell them.

Part 7

Occasionally then people do ask me 'hmm what's that? And I think ah yes you want me to say' I don't know' because then the visitor will say 'oh it's this, I know something even the lady doesn't know'. So then they feel very happy. So I have to be quite a diplomat with the visitors and try to work out what it is they want. What irritates me sometimes is people come in - now you can buy a guide book, you can buy an expensive guide book with lots of pictures, or a cheap sheet with lots of information or a children's guide. Now quite often the children's guide is very good. Sometimes people have no guide book, and they come in and they say 'tell us about *this* room'. Well I think 'no, why should I tell you everything, you can buy a guide book.' But I don't say that, I tell them a few things. I don't tell them everything. Whereas if they *have* got a guide book and they have looked at it and they don't quite understand something, guide books aren't always very clear, the adult ones, or they are very interested, then I will tell them more, because there's always lots more that we could tell them, say about the family and so on. Very often what people are interested in is aspects of the former owners, or what's happening today. They know the house is historical, they like all the old things but somehow they want a link with today.

So what about 'today?' Now quasi government, and something that's 'quasi' means almost, so the Trust is not government, it's a non government organisation but many people think that it is and many people take it for granted. Or they are rude about it as they are rude about the B.B.C. - 'Auntie B.B.C.' or 'Nanny National Trust' telling us this and that. So sometimes its problematic to make it clear that we are independent. There are commercial pressures, we all need more money, the university needs more money here. Every organisation is always trying to get more money, to sell their things, to realise their assets. Sometimes you feel commercial pressures outweigh other aspects of what we are doing. Then there is the question of what we are preserving. Say in the beginning the Trust focused on land, then because of problems with country houses around the time of the two world wars we took an interest in house. So again many British people think the National Trust is all about looking after the big houses of rich people. Who were not particularly nice people or good people they just had lots of money and built nice houses.

So that is why increasingly the Trust is diversifying if you like, so I mentioned that it owns a prison and at least one factory. It owns the houses of two of the Beatles. These are fairly new acquisitions to show that it's not just a question of rich houses, lovely pictures, porcelain and so on, it's also about how people live. Something else the Trust owns as well are slums. It owns a slum flat in Glasgow - a very small flat of a poor person but who kept the flat nicely so visitors can go in and appreciate it.

So preserving more, different things. But then we can say 'who is it for?' Because those original members, the 100 members, were middle class, white people who perhaps lived in houses a bit like some of the country houses. But Britain is a multi-cultural society now, we're not all middle class and white - we are from many countries of many faiths. So perhaps we should reflect that, if it's going to be a 'national' trust it needs to be more national.

Now this year, 2007, is the 200th anniversary of the passing of the Anti-Slave Trade Bill - slavery could not be traded. There are still slaves, so amongst other things the Trust is looking at the contribution of slavery to the houses and property that it owns. I am involved in a project to involve more poor families in Trust properties. To make things more accessible. So if you are looking at a house which has very expensive Chinese porcelain or pictures of Henry VIII, worth a million pounds, it's a bit different from your own house and lifestyle. So what's the link? We are trying to discuss this, find the stories, make the link for people, so that the Trust is more truly 'national'. But as I said at the beginning it's not just for British nationals - you are welcome too. So I hope indeed James will organise a trip to a property.