

England's Past for Everyone: National Trust

Ben Cowell

**Assistant Director, External Affairs
National Trust**

The National Trust

- The largest conservation charity in the country
- We look after significant holdings of land and buildings:
 - 300 historic properties,
 - 2.5m items in our historic collections,
 - 250,000 hectares of countryside,
 - 700 miles of coastline.

Going Local with the National Trust

- ‘Going local’ in management terms:
 - more delegation of responsibility to the local level
 - Property managers encouraged to engage with local communities
- ‘Going local’ in presentation terms:
 - Re-presenting properties so that they tell their own stories, on their own terms
 - Examples include Atmospheres project in West Midlands, or our recent London Voices project (funded by HLF)

Examples of volunteers involved in local history

- Volunteers undertook interviews with a range of local residents at Stonehenge – including a shepherd, an RAF engineer, local farmers, a blacksmith, a gamekeeper, and the daughter of a 1930s druid. The interviews formed the basis of an exhibition in 2005 and were used again in the ‘Inspired by Stonehenge’ exhibition which can currently be seen at the Wiltshire Heritage Museum
- At Tyntesfield, we benefit from around 500 volunteers, many of whom have a great interest in researching the house and estate. We’ve just established a research group which meets every three months to hear about recent research and discuss new projects
- At Speke Hall and at Stourhead, volunteers have carried out essential research which feeds into the interpretation of the properties. This sort of joint working helps to spread a sense of shared ownership of the significance of the properties, and that then gets communicated to our visitors
- Also at Stonehenge, volunteer researchers undertook the background work on a new interpretation panel for the Nile Clumps – clumps of beech trees said to represent the positions of the British and French ships at the Battle of the Nile. This was a partnership with the Rotary Club, funded by the Trust and the volunteering charity vteam