

May '09

media release

Make-a-date to visit Stoke-on-Trent

A busy schedule of walks, talks, exhibitions, festivals, lectures and 'hands-on' family activities have been scheduled to take place in-and-around the City of Stoke-on-Trent throughout the coming year, to mark a trio of major anniversaries.

It's the lives and times of master potter Josiah Wedgwood, naturalist Charles Darwin, and a leading light of the Arts & Crafts Movement Thomas Wardle, which are all currently helping to turn the spotlight onto the history and heritage of Stoke-on-Trent and The Potteries.

And a listing of special events to commemorate their achievements are now included on the website www.visitstoke.co.uk/anniversary - as well as in a brand new leaflet.

The Wedgwood company was established in 1759 by the innovative potter, Josiah Wedgwood, and has grown over the last 250 years to become one of the most iconic brands in Britain. Several annual events - including the ever-popular Etruria Canals Festival over the weekend of May 30th and 31st - will have a much stronger Wedgwood focus this year; and the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery will have a special exhibition dedicated to "Josiah Wedgwood: The Man in the Making" from July 18th to November 22nd.

Elsewhere, there will be several summer walks and talks around The Potteries during the summer in the company of local historians, who will be able to provide an insight into the works and life of this world famous potter. And the Wedgwood company headquarters itself will be an obvious place for pottery pilgrims to visit. The new £10.5-million Wedgwood Museum, for example, showcases the full history of the company, and the adjacent Visitor Centre offers a fascinating behind-the-scenes glimpse of the manufacturing process.

This year also marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles Darwin, who has strong associations with Stoke-on-Trent, partly due to the fact that Josiah Wedgwood was his grandfather. Young Charles also spent a lot of time at Maer Hall, where Josiah Wedgwood II lived. And he eventually married his cousin, Emma Wedgwood, in the village church of St Peter's.

A place where Charles spent many of his formative years, Maer is arguably the "unsung hero" of his *Origin of the Species*, and is now gearing-up to host a full programme of events throughout the summer – including walks around Maer village led by local experts, a Victorian supper celebration using Mrs Beeton's recipes, afternoon teas and a Victorian Fair.

A major exhibition focusing on local industrialist Thomas Wardle, who collaborated closely with William Morris, meanwhile, will be held at the Nicholson Institute in Leek from July 3rd to August 29th. For further details, visit www.textilefestival.com.

Copies of Stoke-on-Trent's *Anniversary Events 2009* leaflet can be obtained by contacting Stoke-on-Trent Tourist Information Centre, Victoria Hall, Cultural Quarter, Stoke-on-Trent City Centre, ST1 3AD. (T: 01782-236000. E: stoke.tic@stoke.gov.uk).

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