



NORTHWOOD HOUSE NEWSLETTER 29 NOVEMBER 2011

TRUST MATTERS

Our recent advertisement for an Administrator to fill the gap left by Jo Ferguson after her sterling work for the Trust over the summer received 64 responses. After much sifting a shortlist of five applicants was interviewed and from a strong field Ros Heron was selected to join the Trust. She brings a wealth of very relevant experience, including ten years as a school bursar, and we look forward to working with her. She joins our book-keeper, Amanda Bartholomew, who recently joined us and is already making significant improvements to Trustee systems.

The public meeting held at the House on Monday 28 November to inform and consult the public on forthcoming changes to the charitable Scheme which governs the Trust went well. Responding to an advert and letters in the 'County Press', posters in the Park and several weeks' notice on our website, some 60 local people came along to hear a summary of the proposed changes to the Scheme and were able to ask some useful questions. The draft Charitable Scheme and Articles of Association of the new Trust Company can be found on our website, www.northwoodhouse.org.

THE HOUSE

As always, work is ongoing to repair, restore and upgrade facilities in the House. Six more heaters have been installed in the Bar, Crush Hall and Library. This required significant amounts of additional cabling from the meter room to two new fuse boards to enable further cables to be run to plug sockets in the new areas, but the majority of the basic work was done by Chris Bucket, the House Manager, along with



three very practical handyman volunteers. It was then inspected and the final connections made by a qualified electrician to ensure electrical safety. This work took four days and doing it this way probably saved over £4,000. The improvement to comfort in the House is considerable.

Additionally, water meters are being installed which should make a significant saving. Improved and decorative lighting has been installed in the Library, and a stalwart volunteer continues to carry out external window repair work on the west side of the ballroom. The House Manager, Chris Bucket, heard a rumour that there were some chairs suitable for Northwood House on sale at Shanklin Theatre; many of our existing chairs are showing signs of wear and we were able to pick up 52 excellent quality chairs at a very useful price. As they all match, the Drawing Room now has its own chairs.

One of our 'newly-marrieds' made the House a gift of some table easels which will be very useful for various events, and I have written to thank them for this supportive gesture.

EVENTS



A top local hair & beauty salon recently used the House for a photo-shoot for 'Island Life' magazine. The House looked its best in

the unseasonal sunshine and we shall get good publicity within the article itself.

A 'musical extravaganza' was held at the House this month, much enjoyed by all who attended, and it was very nice to see our boudoir grand piano being used by one of the professional musicians. The 'A-frame' has been installed to allow safe if limited movement of the instrument.

A number of 'ghost walks' were held in and around the House by Mark Tuckey during the week leading up to Hallowe'en, and on 'the day' itself. Local interest in the House led to surprisingly large numbers of people coming along to be frightened out of their wits. Mr Tuckey has already rebooked for 2012.

Christmas party bookings are still being taken by All About Catering, so any groups who may have 'missed the boat' with local venues might like to discuss a date.

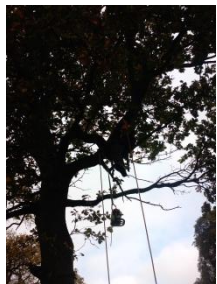
Once again we are delighted to welcome the Motor Neurone Disease Association to the House for their Antiques Fair in February, just one of the 37 events so far booked for 2012; and we are also honoured to confirm that Northwood House has been chosen as a central base for the 'Blyskawica' celebrations next May. Discussions continue about a Literary Festival, to be based at Northwood House in October 2012.

THE PARK



Work on the Park trees continues. We are still prioritising trees which are diseased or damaged or present a potential threat to public safety (such as the big cedar (left) which has a significant crack and will have to be

strapped), but this work is largely complete and we are moving on to a general 'crown lift' across the Park. This means pruning the lower branches of appropriate trees to a height of approximately two metres above the ground – some trees have a natural tendency to trail on the ground and will not be touched, but others are simply overgrown and neglected. At the same time we are looking to



identify suitable species to incorporate in a replanting scheme. A very useful and positive meeting was held with the Tree Officer, who confirmed his approval of our direction of travel and praised the work done by our tree surgeon (left). His

main recommendations are that we make speedy progress on the updated Park survey (which has been started by the Friends of Northwood House & Park) and work towards a replanting scheme without delay.

A working party 'wellied up' to wash and scrub the play area surface which has become slippery, probably made worse by the location under the trees (and the birds who sit in them!). Although it is better, we are not satisfied and are taking advice. We are grateful to the interested parent who is researching possible equipment to occupy the vacant space, but costs so far are prohibitive. We are also very grateful to the owners of Wine Therapy, the new wine merchants in Cowes High Street, who very kindly donated a sum of money to



enable the Trustees to replace the swings which were recently damaged by vandals. We are enormously grateful to Nichola Roe and Terence

Young for their generosity, and for their continued interest in helping the Trust to update and improve the play area.

The flower beds and herbaceous border have been cut back as winter approaches, and the big plant pots round the house continue to be maintained. The tennis nets will be taken down for the winter for refurbishment and repair. Some of the support posts have been damaged and will have to be replaced.

Leaves keep falling and the Wednesday and Saturday morning working group led by Janet Allan has been active here – rakes and refreshments are provided, as well as a convivial atmosphere and the knowledge that they are helping look after the Park for everyone's enjoyment and keeping fit at the same time. More helpers would be very welcome – the more the merrier!



CAR PARKING

As reported last month, just over a year ago the Trust spent more than £1,400 on upgrading the Rotunda car park and installing ticket machines. Our intention was to stop long-term parking, create safer access and ensure this area was available for short-



term parkers who have been able to park free for one hour. Unfortunately, it has become clear that frequent movements are wearing out the surface and our insurers are concerned; some temporary patch repairs have been provided free by a

friendly contractor for which the Trustees are very grateful, but significant maintenance work must be planned for and, with

regret, the Trustees have agreed to introduce a charge for the first hour of parking in this car park.

The charge will be 50p, with other charges staying as they are. Costs



associated with altering the machines will be covered by Euro Car Parks and the limited free parking spaces made available when events are booked in the House will continue. I know that visitors have appreciated being able to park in a properly managed car park at no cost for an hour, and I very much hope they will understand why the Trustees are taking this step. Shortly, instead of just going up to take their ticket for a free hour's parking, they will need to take 50p with them as well. Rest assured the income will be used for maintenance which all can see is becoming necessary.

Arrangements have been made with Cowes Business Association, which wants to encourage coaches to come to Cowes.

COMMUNITY HALL

A new notice-board has been put up on the wall of the Community Hall facing the courtyard. Users of



the Park should keep an eye on it for useful information. A significant amount of lead has been stolen from the roof of the Hall, compromising its weatherproofing; we are working on replacing it but it is an unforeseen and significant cost. The new lighting – installed by volunteers and with an offer of funding from the Friends of Northwood House & Park – is a great improvement.



Thank you for your interest. I would, as always, welcome any comments.

Ann Thwaites

29 November 2011