

## NORTHWOOD HOUSE NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2012

### TRUST MATTERS

An application for village green status for Northwood Park has been lodged by Paul Taylor and there is a 30-day period for public comment, ending 9 March. The Isle of Wight Council have confirmed that its function at this time is to ensure the form was correctly completed. It has not taken any view on the merits or otherwise of this application, which will now go through due process. The Trustees regret this application, which they are advised is misguided because the Park has been dedicated for the use and enjoyment of the public since 1929 and therefore cannot become a Village Green. Any costs of contesting this unnecessary application will be an unhelpful financial burden to the Trust, reducing funds available to look after the House and Park at a time when they are working on the correct Trust structure to secure the future of the Park.



Trustees are aware that the Nunnery Steps area is in need of attention, though sadly at present we are not in

possession of sufficient funds to enable us to carry out the necessary work. We want this entrance to the Park, so visible from the Parade, the Royal Yacht Squadron and Holy Trinity, to be significantly tidied and cleaned and some repairs to the steps and plasterwork and repainting carried out – in the earlier colours of buff and cream rather than the current inappropriate pink.

The Trust is preparing a request for Cowes Town Council to carry on paying for emptying the dog and litter bins for the coming year. As soon as funds allow we would like to replace the bins with smarter, more modern



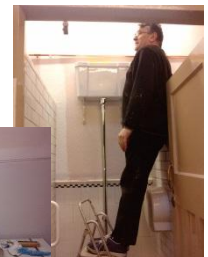
ones, which would make a big improvement in the appearance of the Park and reduce maintenance costs.

The Charity Commission has broadly agreed the draft new Scheme and Articles for the associated company limited by guarantee and the Scheme will shortly be issued for consultation so that the public can send comments to the Commission for consideration.

We continue carefully to monitor expenditure and income against budget and to make efforts to increase our income.

### THE HOUSE

Following receipt of listed building consent to create a disabled toilet, the first stage has begun, which is to upgrade the ladies' loos.



Thanks are due to Roger Bullman who came in at short notice to assist our House Manager, Chris Buckett, in getting this overdue work under way.

As may be remembered, we are fortunate enough to have a Blüthner boudoir grand piano on long term loan from a Cowes resident, and the custom-made cover is now in place. The piano is available for hire by suitably experienced pianists for all kinds of musical events.

Although the Registrar's department left Northwood House in September 2010 and relocated to the Council's Seaclose offices, we are still receiving visits from people wanting to register babies and so on. We have asked for the Council to make more effort to stop people making wasted journeys.

## EVENTS

We are pleased to report that significant numbers of weddings and receptions in the House have been booked already, with the first of the year taking place next Friday. Other events are also being booked; check our website, [www.northwoodhouse.org/whatson](http://www.northwoodhouse.org/whatson) for up-to-date details but some dates for your diaries include:

- Antiques Fair organised by and in aid of Motor Neurone Disease Association 12 Feb 10.30am-3.00pm;
- Charity Tea Dance organised by and in aid of Diabetes Research IW 26 Feb 2.00pm-6.00pm;
- the Blyskwica commemoration reception and concert over the weekend of 4/5 May;
- Jubilee celebrations in the Park, planned for 4 June.

We are delighted that All About Catering continue to be our nominated contractor for catering events at Northwood House.

## THE PARK

The first grass cut of the season was undertaken on 18 and 19 January, a month earlier than last year as a result of the warm weather. A major professional trim and tidy of all hedges was carried out by Andy Butler's team around the Park Road car park, along Ward Avenue, around the old putting green and close to the House, and volunteers cleared away all the brash. Trimming of bushes in the park will take place in early February. Because most of the leaves have fallen from the trees, the nature of the Wednesday and Saturday working sessions (10 a.m. to 1 p.m.) has changed. In addition to a bit of leaf



raking, the stalwart volunteers have added gardening to their tasks and have pruned the rose bushes by Flora; deadheaded plants in the

herbaceous border; and tidied the planters. The poppies blooming in the herbaceous border are another sign of the mild weather. We have been in contact with the Fire & Rescue Service who have very kindly offered to help with power-washing the play area and the tennis courts to remove the build-up of slippery and unsightly algae and debris.

We would like to buy a new piece of equipment for the play area to replace the seesaw which was removed some time ago. The cost of our selection, a Glow Worm seesaw, is £2,367.60, and we will be seeking funding assistance to buy this as currently Trust funds cannot bear the cost.

Work on the trees in the Park continues. The winter blustery weather caused very little damage to the trees, demonstrating that the work to prioritise the public safety issues has been effective: one small, shallow-rooted conifer was brought down one windy night and a branch of a macrocarpa near the tennis courts split, but these were minor issues and swiftly dealt with by our tree surgeon. The 'cobra bracing' has now been installed in the big cedar to help support its massive limbs following identification of a crack; Park users



may notice that the bracing is slightly lower in the tree than is normally the case, but its location has been carefully chosen to take account of the height and strength of the various tall branches. The bracing might also appear to the lay observer to be loose, but current thinking on this equipment advises that a small amount of flex is beneficial to allow the tree some movement without biting into the trunk. Work to lift the hanging branches over the tennis court is under way, to reduce the amount of algae and debris they deposit on the surface. We also have



permission to fell the large decayed holm oak near the path by the church wall, but have decided that in the short term we will only take out some of the upper limbs which still have some leaves on them, to reduce the weight on the decaying trunk, and

leave the base as a habitat for wildlife. At some time in the future it will decay to the point that it will have to be taken down, but at present it presents no danger. We have permission for other works but the constraints

of our budget are such that we must continue to prioritise public safety. However, work is in hand to fell a large, decayed and damaged holm oak below the former putting green, and sale of the wood may enable the tree to pay for itself. A replanting scheme is currently under consideration and an application has been approved for a batch of free trees from the Woodland Trust. The species are 'wildlife-friendly' and include oaks, rowans and hazels – plus one tree grown from stock on a Royal estate for planting to commemorate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in June – and are due for delivery in March. Further to my report last month, the honey fungus issue is not at present of concern as we are advised that many of the trees in the park are species which are resistant to it. A dozen stumps in the Park – some old and decayed, some more recent – are trip hazards and should be removed, and we are obtaining quotations for this work. Budget restraints mean that we are likely to be able to remove only the most hazardous.

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

*Ann Thwaites*

1 February 2012

#### **CAR PARKING**

A charge of 50p for the first hour's parking was introduced in the Rotunda short-stay car park on 30 January. All other charges in both car parks remain unchanged. Visit [enquiries@eurocarparks.com](mailto:enquiries@eurocarparks.com) for information. If people are delayed and need to extend their parking ticket from a distance, the Verrus system has been in operation for the Park Road car park for over a year and top-up payments can be made by phoning EuroCarParks on 0844 844 9996 quoting location 8059, or texting "info65565".

#### **COMMUNITY HALL**

The Hall continues to be used by local groups including our stalwart short-mat bowlers, Cowes WI and the Cowes wine-making society, all of whom appreciate the newly upgraded lighting. Pilates classes are being held on a regular basis and an introductory workshop for interested new participants will be held on 11 February. The hall is an ideal location for meetings and all sorts of local events, being spacious, warm and with good facilities. For more information see our website at [www.northwoodhouse.org/whatson](http://www.northwoodhouse.org/whatson).