



NORTHWOOD HOUSE NEWSLETTER

30 August 2011

There has, as always, been much activity in the House and Park this month.

HOUSE

Finance, as always, is challenging for us and of necessity spending is very carefully controlled; however, in June we successfully reinsured the House and Park at a reduced premium. Power suppliers have been investigated as meters and tariffs in place from IWC times were found not to be best value, and significant savings are already being made with more to come.

The Trust continues to benefit from the support of individuals in the community, most



recently with the loan of scaffolding towers to enable significant repair work to be carried out on the Rotunda ceiling. Volunteers have continued to work at improving the appearance of the lower floors of the House. Expenditure is prioritised

on making the house water- and weather-proof.

We have accepted a very generous long-term loan of a piano, along with funding of maintenance costs and a secure protective cover. It has already provided a backdrop to entertainments in the House and we hope to make more use of it for future events.

A helpful article, 'The History behind Northwood House', written by Janet Allan and based on research by Elizabeth Campbell, was published in a national magazine, Heritage Homes. Unfortunately we were notified of publication too late for anyone to buy that edition; however, it is shown in full on both the Friends' and the Trust's websites.

Maggie Ankers has sought and received useful professional advice about 'greening' Northwood House.

PARK

In the Park, there was damage by vandalism to the children's swings and two families have offered to sponsor replacement equipment.

We would very much like to buy new equipment to replace the see-saw removed by IWC some time ago and are researching what this could be. Financial support from the community would undoubtedly speed up the replacement process and will be sought.

The third visit by the Green Gym resulted in considerable tidying of the Park. The flower



planting carried out by Trustees, Friends and volunteers from the community has made the flower-beds most attractive, and

turfing some beds has significantly improved this aspect of the house.

The Friends of Northwood House & Park have given funds to support this, as well as the purchase of tables of a more suitable size for events in the House.

Cowes Town Council's undertaking to pay for litter bin maintenance in this financial year has been very welcome. One damaged bin has been removed and plans to replace it include reviewing the best location and a programme of upgrading to improve the look of the Park.

Important and ongoing work on the trees in



the Park has been approved by the Tree Officer and carried out by a trained Tree Surgeon; we are working from an existing review of

trees in the Park but this has become outdated and the Friends of Northwood House & Park are assisting with drawing up a new 'tree map'. Funds are severely limited and health & safety issues are and will continue to be the prime reasons for undertaking work. Significant and essential work has been carried out on the trees leaning on the wall of the Rotunda car park, which should reduce the pressure on it; however, the wall continues to cause concern. Offers of trees for a replanting scheme will be considered but initial care and ongoing maintenance must be available.

EVENTS

Cowes Carnival, led by Lynn Hammond, undertook to run special car parking on the grass adjacent to Ward Avenue for the closing event of the Island Games, and also for Cowes Week as in the past. Car parking continues to be an important source of

income for the Trust and the training, preparation and time given to these events by Lynn and her volunteers is very much appreciated and the Trustees all registered their appreciation of this wonderful support from the community and expect to make recompense for their efforts in the usual manner (final income and cost information is not yet to hand). Lynn also brought in great support for the Fete on Cowes Week Family Day and has ideas for other events during the year.

Cowes Week Limited made a request for Northwood Park to join in the Aberdeen Asset Management Family Day on the first Sunday of Cowes Week. Despite the short notice, it was decided to run an old-fashioned Village Fete to appeal especially to families with young children who would be able to enjoy simple pleasures and the space to run about and picnic in the Park.

Although neither organisation was able to support the event, Trustees and Friends and other supporters in the neighbourhood created a very successful, relaxed event. Some local charities took the opportunity to have stalls and a musical duo and a belly-dancing group provided memorable entertainment. There were races for children



and other entertainments including a very popular bouncy slide and castle. Publicising such events is always a challenge and a last-minute

push was very helpful in getting across our message. Entry was free and we benefitted from the fact that the Park is a main pedestrian route from the Crossfield Avenue end of Cowes to the town centre, so a few surprised (and delighted) families joined in the fun. A small surplus will go into Trust funds and we hope to run this event again. Many thanks to those who joined us on that day and helped make it a success.

During Cowes Week, All About Catering offered light lunches, tea and cakes on the best china and cocktails and canapés at suitable times of day, with piano accompaniment.

I was delighted to join the Mayor in opening the Cowes Week Bowling Competition and presenting the prizes at the end of their very successful week-long event.

Two successful large weddings and receptions took place in the House, as well as smaller

events. September looks busy and bookings are being made now into 2012.

In an interesting development, we have been approached about holding several events next May to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the defence of Cowes by the Polish ship ORP Blyskawica.

Some expressions of interest have been received about celebrating the Queen's Jubilee next year and these will be followed up. The Trustees are very keen to see the Park used for events of this type to be enjoyed by everyone in the community, including visitors.

We are participating in the English Heritage National Open Days on September 10 and 11 when we will be offering tours of the parts of the House not normally seen. Refreshments will also be available, courtesy of All About Catering.

TRUSTEES' ACTIVITIES

Since last reporting there have been three formal meetings of the Trustees.

The report and accounts for the 18-month period to 30.9.2010 have been completed and sent to the Charities Commission in advance of the deadline. They appear on the Trust's website. The Trustees are building up a more accurate picture of actual running costs than we have in the past been able to do, and budgets for the next financial year are in discussion.

Useful meetings have been held with Cowes Town Council, English Heritage, the Isle of Wight Council, the Friends of Northwood House and Park and event organisers interested in using Northwood House. A meeting with the Charities Commission has been delayed due to holidays.

It has been a challenge to keep up the impetus during the holiday season as well as Cowes Week, but the effort to progress the House and Park towards a sustainable future has carried on.

My thanks to my colleagues and to all those in the community who have supported in word and deed.

Ann Thwaiter

30.8.2011

