



## ROTUNDA TRANSFORMED!

Regular visitors to the House may have noticed that the Rotunda – the round hall with the domed ceiling and pillared portico facing the smaller car park – has been undergoing a facelift over recent months.

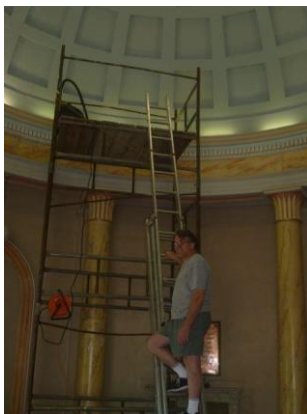
The Rotunda is the most memorable part of the House and it's important that visitors have a view of it as it was meant to be when George Ward had the house remodelled in 1837. His vision was to bring visitors along the carriage drive across the landscape park (roughly where Crossfield Avenue now lies) and to bring them finally to the House down the sloping drive to the Rotunda with its impressive façade. Over time the pillars and stonework had become dilapidated, peeling and decayed, and hours of volunteers' time have been spent scraping and repainting the pillars and the main doors.



It's when you enter the Rotunda now, though, that the full extent of the work that's been done can be appreciated. At some time in its relatively recent history, for some reason the remarkable domed ceiling with its central light panel had been painted a rather unfortunate shade of orange by the Isle of Wight Council. This colour has no historical rationale; not only that, but the panels in the light were filthy, damp had penetrated the ceiling and the paint and plaster were peeling and discoloured.



Renovation of this iconic area was a task not to be undertaken lightly. However, our indefatigable House Manager, Chris, decided to take it on, and over the last couple of months anyone looking for



Chris would generally find him on top of a scaffold – the highest point of the ceiling is more than 26' from the marble floor – scraping off the old peeling paint and dislodging the cracked and loose plaster. Similarities with Michaelangelo painting the Sistine Chapel were obvious! Our volunteer plasterer, Jim, then did the replastering and Chris worked round the whole ceiling with two coats of a lovely clear pale blue-grey. Finally he took out the ceiling panels, washed and replaced them (sadly, the original glass had been lost in the mists of time) and now the Rotunda can once again be seen in its full glory. Chris deserves a medal for bringing this long, challenging task to a successful conclusion.

