



CHAIR OF THE TRUST, ANN THWAITES, SAYS 'THANK YOU'

As you may know, the Trustees have a number of stated aims:

- to maintain the fine public rooms for public use;
- to restore and maintain the façade of the House in its garden;
- and, of course, to maintain the Park which was given for public enjoyment.

Trustees have a legal responsibility to maintain the House and our challenge is to find a way to restore the rest of the listed building to the satisfaction of English Heritage and to identify a sustainable future for it. This is a massive job, which could not possibly be carried out by a very small number of Trustees and Advisers; and I should like to take this opportunity to tell you about the enormous amount of help and support we receive.



We have been astonished at the continuing commitment from volunteers, who have brought their skills and strength to all sorts of tasks inside and outside. They have cleaned, scraped, filled and painted inside and out, rebuilt rotten woodwork, repaired curtains, stripped out unnecessary and out of date wiring, supplied and fitted a handrail, cleared years of accumulated unwanted items and rubbish from the House and cellar, assisted with IT



installations, set up our website, loaned a large trailer to remove huge quantities of park detritus until a suitable composting area can be created, raised bedding plants, weeded and dug, cleared leaves. That's just part of my 'jobs done' list!

Support comes in different guises. Most recently the Cowes Week Family Day/Village Fete was supported by the Chillerton and Gatcombe Horticultural Society and the Rookley Village Association, the WI, the RNLI, the Stroke Association and of course the Friends of Northwood House & Park (we just call them the Friends) – not to mention the belly-dancing group, 'Eastern Promise', who entranced everyone, and the musical duo 'The Pistoleros', who all gave time or practical assistance freely for the benefit of the Trust.



The Friends have done a range of things to support the Trust in recent months, including organising a successful Jazz evening last Autumn to raise funds and begin what we all hope will be a continuing feast of musical events; donating the Trust £400 towards the cost of some differently-sized dining tables to make best use of our space; successfully applying for a grant which paid for garden equipment to which they added £100 (although this remains the property of the Friends, it is available for other helpers' use); contributing £100 towards planting in pots and beds; purchasing the Christmas tree and lights last year; paying for the repair of the large clock in the crush hall; and funding one of the three Green Gym sessions in the Park at a cost of £50. They Friends also contribute with ideas and by turning out to help at and promote events and they organise a monthly Working Bee in the Park; all are welcome to join their informal friendly group – see their website for details.



Cowes Town Council have undertaken to pay for the maintenance of the dog and litter bins for the current financial year along with repainting of the benches in the play area.

Since reporting the damage to the swings we have received two generous offers of help from local parents and we have also been offered £1000 to buy a powerful leaf collector. We have a lovely piano on long loan, already used in the tea room/cocktail bar during Cowes Week. Its tuning and maintenance costs are covered by another generous donor.

Individuals help us too: Mr & Mrs Moxon donated £50 towards the cost of dog bin provision, the TUC sent in a donation and letter of support, and the Boilermakers Society sent in a very generous cheque for £300. Mrs Barton looks after one of the flower beds, and Moira Green advised us and worked on pruning and sorting out the herbaceous border this spring. Dave Budden gives professional tree advice and work at a very helpful rate. I know everyone isn't named but here goes: Robert, Priscilla, Jim, Kim, Penny, Lynn, Myra, Dennis, Wendy, Sonya, Adam, David, Roger, Steve, Malcolm, Brenda and Gordon, Lew, Ian, Stella, Alan and Sue, Pete, John, the Carnival Committee and all the others who know who they are – **thank you**.

The Trustees and advisors are all volunteers as well, of course, and I am very grateful for the support and effort from colleagues. Our House Manager and Administrator both give far more time than they are paid for and they even draft in their relatives to help – notably Pete and Jenny in recent weeks.

My hope was that this summer we could have found the funds to create a dog-free/child-friendly area where once was the pitch and putt. For a relatively small amount of money this area overlooking the bowling green could be made safe for families to enjoy away from the dogs who have lots of space elsewhere in the Park. Offers of help to provide secure fencing have yet to come to fruition. We would welcome offers of sponsorship for this or for the tennis courts, which of course need regular maintenance. It's great to see the courts in use, but the nets and netting are old and need constant repair to allow play to continue.



All this work could not possibly have been done without the voluntary help so generously given. Currently our main source of funding is car parking on land owned by the Trust, though events such as weddings and family celebrations of all sorts are being booked in the House which make a useful contribution. We pay tradesmen and professionals where necessary but, for the moment, the work done by volunteers is enabling precious funds to be directed to the most urgent need, and thereby allowing the house and park to look as good as it does – some say better than it ever has!

We are always delighted to have extra help. Please contact me or our House Manager, Chris Buckett, on 293642 or via our email address, trustees@northwoodhouse.org.

The Trustees are extremely grateful to the Friends of Northwood House & Park as well as all those other friends in the community who have come forward with practical support and encouragement. We don't always know who you are but big thanks to you all!

Ann Thwaites