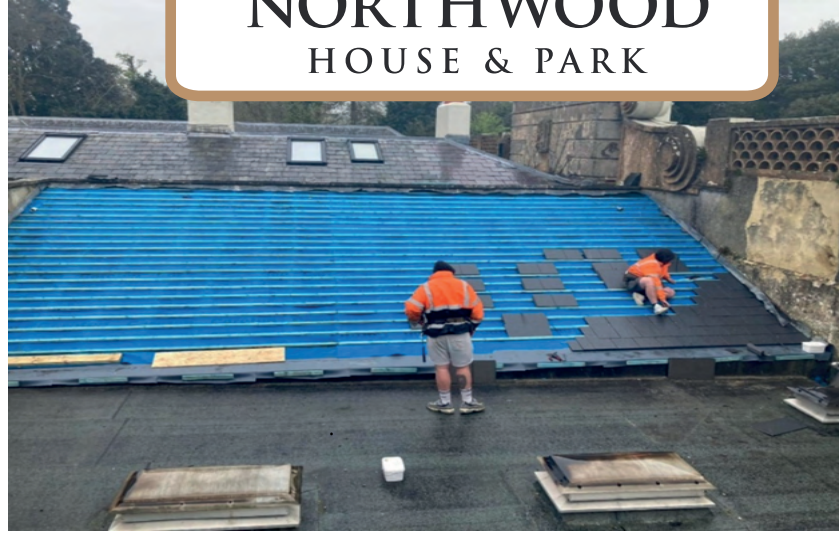


NORTHWOOD HOUSE

NEWS



NORTHWOOD
HOUSE & PARK



A BIG YEAR OF ROOFING PROJECTS SORTS OUT DECADES OF DECAY

Over £100K invested to tackle issues

One of the most pressing challenges for Northwood House Charitable Trust since taking over the custodianship of the Grade II* listed building in 2010 has been trying to maintain the roof over large sections of the building to keep it watertight. With over a third of an acre (1400sqm) of roof space, it has been an ongoing battle and a continual drain on the Charity's maintenance budgets until many issues could be fixed properly. A formal building condition survey commissioned by the Charity in 2021/22 highlighted the extent of the roof work that needed to be undertaken after many years of poor maintenance and short-term fixes dating back to the 1970's and beyond. Large sections of the roof over the non-public side of the building have been in danger of failing, with leaking areas of nail-sick slates,

cracked lead valleys, rotten joists and over-weathered bitumen-based flat roofing, all creating regular ongoing problems and preventing any improvement works happening in the building below. These issues aren't easy to fix on such a large scale and it takes a considerable amount of time to save up for such extensive project work when no alternative funding sources are available. But following a concerted effort of fundraising from events and trading throughout 2023, the Charity was able to generate £100,000 of project funds to tackle the very worst of the problems during 2024. This is a terrific step forward for the long-term future of the building which has been on the Historic England Endangered Building Register for over 30 years.

The Charity's C.O.O, Darren Cool said, "Stopping the ingress of water into an historic listed building like Northwood House is the most important thing we have to do to preserve it's integrity, but we've never really had the funds to tackle such large-scale work until the last couple of years. It's only because we've seen the successful resurgence of the venue as a destination for events and hospitality that it has been possible to start making inroads into vital projects like this. If it wasn't for people coming and spending money at our events, parking in our car parks and renting office space with us on an increasing basis, much of this wouldn't even be possible. So, a huge thank you to the Island community that supports us in these ways and allows us to continue with our mission to restore the place properly and hand it over to the next generation, hopefully all fixed and with a long-term sustainable future. It certainly wasn't the easiest year to undertake roof repairs with wet weather for much of the first half of 2024 hampering the contractors (P.E Ronan) on a regular basis. And even though there are still more roofing works to do in the near future, some of the most pressing areas are now done allowing for much more impactful projects like the renovation of the public toilets and kitchen facilities to be undertaken next."

GREENHOUSE GRANT TO GET
VOLUNTEERS GROWING (pg. 3)

LOTS TO LOOK FORWARD TO IN 2025...
SEE OUR EVENTS SECTION (pg. 4-5)

HOW SCOUTS HELPED IN THE WAR
EFFORT HERE IN COWES (pg. 8)

LEADING THE WAY FOR WEDDINGS AND EVENTS

Northwood House has enjoyed a long history of hosting great events starting in the 1840's. One hundred and eighty years later, it's doing (again) what it does best!

There aren't many Island venues that have stood the test of time like Northwood House. Right from the early days of its construction by George Ward, founder of the Isle of Wight Steam Packet Company (the forerunner of Red Funnel Ferries) it has been a place to come together and celebrate.

From huge parties attracting royal families and aristocrats from all over Europe in the 19th Century to the present day, it now hosts countless events across the calendar year enjoyed by thousands of local people, it really is getting back to what it does best...entertaining people.

For sure, it wasn't always this way, with some very mixed fortunes across nearly two centuries, which saw the venue fall into a steady decline from those heady early heydays when it was the place to come and party, not just on the Island but in England. With a reputed 5000 bottles of wine stored in its vast cellars in the 1840s, who wouldn't want an invitation to rock up to a George Ward party and stay for a couple of weeks, as was often the case!

Of course, the venue no longer has need for such over-stocked cellars, but compared to more recent years in its history, which saw the house degrade slowly under local authority management, the re-emergence of the venue as major Island player again in the events and hospitality scene is something to behold.

When Northwood House Charitable Trust took over the reins in 2010, few people thought that it would be possible to save the old building from a fate



Northwood House looking absolutely stunning this year during Cowes Week celebrations.

other than a slow and painful death, but the doom-mongers and pundits betting on that outcome may well be feeling quite disappointed today, as like a phoenix from the ashes, the venue has risen again. With careful investment from limited funds and working to a careful strategy, the Charity has slowly pulled the venue from nearly rock bottom to become the place to be. Improvements in the facilities and presentation have all played a part along with the building of a small but dedicated team of staff. Although there is still much to do, things are vastly better. This was evident none-more-so in the 2024 Cowes Week period when it received record numbers of visitors to be entertained. An estimated 60,000 visitors will have passed through the venue by the end of the year. In 2010 there were less than 2000.

All this is having a very positive effect on the future outlook of the venue as much needed funds are being generated to expedite restoration works when none had been done for decades. Weddings remain one of the most important revenue streams for the venue which hosts anywhere between 15 and 25 ceremonies and/or receptions throughout the year. With all the main function rooms licensed for wedding ceremonies, the scope and size of the weddings that can be offered is very diverse. The venue can easily deliver small intimate events for just a handful of people to extravagant wedding parties with all the bells and whistles, dining up to 160 people inside and even more if marquees are used on the lawns. The venue offers a list of over ten quality local caterers to choose from in any wedding package, giving couples great flexibility in what food they can have and the ability to manage budgets effectively. One of the great advantages of Northwood House is that it is a bomb-proof choice for all weather scenarios. There's lots of lovely outdoor lawn space for nice sunny days but if the weather gods aren't playing ball, then there's plenty of indoor space so that nobody's special day is going to get spoiled. So, whether it's a wedding, family celebration, charity ball, corporate function, awards dinner, school prom or wake, there isn't much we can't do. And with upgraded toilets and kitchen facilities planned for later in 2025, it will get even better.



The Northwood House Ballroom, renovated in 2023 and themed for a recent awards event.

by Darren Cool (C.O.O)
Northwood House Charitable Trust Co. Ltd

WIGHTAID GREENHOUSE GRANT WILL GET GARDENING VOLUNTEERS GROWING...

GOOD TIMES AHEAD FOR GREEN-FINGERED ENTHUSIASTS!

A generous funding grant from the WightAID Foundation made to enhance facilities for the Charity's volunteer gardeners has been gratefully received. The £8,800 grant has been used to purchase a new 20ft x 10ft greenhouse and propagation equipment for the volunteers' use to grow plants for planting out in the herbaceous borders of Northwood Park. Current facilities are limited to just two tiny greenhouses which are hardly big enough for more than two volunteers to use at one time. Trustee Director and Volunteer Co-ordinator Sue Collinge said, "Volunteer numbers have grown steadily over the last few years, with over 30 local people turning up regularly on Wednesday and Saturday mornings to help the Charity keep Northwood Park tidy and well looked after on behalf of the local community. The work they do is incredible, but our facilities can no longer cope with the surge of interest. We are so grateful to WightAid for recognising the huge benefit that volunteers bring to the Charity and to

those who come along and take part. It's socially inclusive allowing local people to meet up, make friends and enjoy a few hours of outdoor activity every week, creating something they can all be proud of. The new greenhouse will allow volunteers to grow and nurture many plants for use in the park and even to sell them for fundraising purposes which is something many of them want to do."

The new greenhouse will be built and ready for use early in the New Year and will complete the first stage of other improvements for the regular team of gardening volunteers. A new restroom, kitchenette and toilet are also due to be opened in 2025 to make the volunteering experience even better. For people who might not be lucky enough to have their own garden, volunteering in this way can help satisfy any green-fingered enthusiasm.



Trustees Sue Collinge (second left), Roseleen Cullen (second right) & Janet Allan (first right) at the WightAid cheque presentation where other local charities were also in attendance.

FANCY VOLUNTEERING? FIND OUT MORE THIS JANUARY



Northwood House has become a great place for people with a few hours of spare time to come and volunteer for a good community cause. Whether it's helping to make tea or parking cars at one of our many events or by helping to keep Northwood Park looking great for visitors, there's always something you can do help out as the Charity continues on its journey to give the venue a long-term sustainable future, fully restored and in good shape for generations to come. Find out more by coming to our next recruitment days.



JOIN OUR PARK & GARDEN OR CAFE VOLUNTEER TEAM IN 2025

FIND OUT MORE AND GET A TOUR AT OUR NEXT RECRUITMENT MORNINGS...

11AM-12PM WEDS 8th & SAT 11th JANUARY 2025

MEET AT OUR ST MARY'S ENTRANCE • REFRESHMENTS • ALL WELCOME!

NEW PARK SWINGS A BIG HIT WITH FAMILIES

It was in last year's winter newsletter that we launched the "Save Our Swings Appeal" asking for donations from the community to help pay for a new set of playground swings. Less than four months later, thanks to an overwhelming response from local businesses and individuals, the new set of swings and even a new see-saw had been funded and installed in the park's playground. The majority of the project was funded by the new Robin Hill owner Mr Lee Priddle with

groundworks done by Alan Attrill of Pondacre Partnership with materials supplied by John Smith of Richard Carter Readimix. The new swings have been a huge hit with local families this summer, so a massive thank you to everyone who made a donation, large or small.



Charity C.O.O Darren Cool (left) thanks Mr Lee Priddle for his generous contribution to the project.

SAVE THE DATE

EVENTS COMING SOON

LET'S GET THE PARTY STARTED!



THE DELUX DISCO CHRISTMAS PARTY NIGHTS

The Island's coolest Christmas party venue, The House Lounge, is back with its Delux Disco Christmas Party Nights on selected dates in December. Our popular pop-up cocktail, wine & gin bar is now a festive favourite for party goers and we have seven evenings when groups can book a table and enjoy an exclusive Christmas party vibe with friends or work colleagues.

The House Lounge Christmas Parties

6th-7th-13th-14th-19th-20th-21st Dec

Tickets are only £29.50 per head and include some party food and selection of drinks. The uber-cool Delux Disco soundtrack is provided by our resident host, DJ Omar, playing the best party and club anthems with some Christmas classics thrown in for good measure. It's perfect for getting you and your friends up on the dance floor and celebrating properly! Last few tickets are now available, so be quick. Doors open at 7.30pm with a 12.30am finish.



Northwood House Wedding Fair

Sat 11th & Sun 12th January

With a romantic charm that's hard to beat, it's no wonder Northwood House is one of the most popular wedding venues on the Island! The wedding journey can be a little bit daunting for some couples at the beginning but we are here to help by hosting our free-to-enter Wedding Fair Weekend on Saturday 11th and Sunday 12th January 2025.



Couples and their families can come along and see what Northwood House has to offer as a wedding ceremony and reception venue as well as see a range of the Island's best wedding suppliers who'll be exhibiting with us. Our wedding team will be available to chat through the various options, possible hire costs and availability. Book a time slot on our website today to reserve your free tickets.

The Second Grand Highland Fling-a-ling!

7.15pm, Fri 24th January



Enjoy the fun and frivolity of our fanatastic Burns Night celebration...the Grand Highland Fling-a-ling! Be welcomed by a piper, enjoy a warming whisky cocktail followed by the annual haggis and heather hurling competition! A three-course Burns-themed supper will be served before it's back to the Ballroom for the grand finale where you can reel the night away to a live ceilidh band and caller. It's going to be an absolute hoot for all ages! Scottish-themed attire, black ties and posh frocks are very much encouraged. Tickets are £39.50 with all proceeds to the Charity. northwoodhouse.org/events

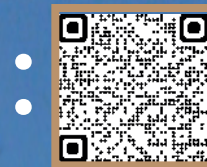
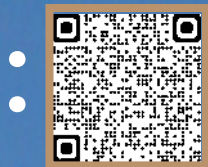
Ad Lib Theatre's New Comedy Play

7.30pm, Thur 30th & Fri 31st January



Tickets only £10 each from our website.

Scan to get our latest updates on social media:



For information and tickets for our events please go to:
northwoodhouse.org
or call 01983 293642

Wight Proms Wednesdays

Various dates through 2025



You don't have to wait until the main Wight Proms event in August to enjoy great quality entertainment. Join us on various Wednesdays throughout 2025 for a unique lunchtime concert with talented singers and musicians. You can even book to have a tasty lunch with friends in the Drawing Room after the concert. The dates for 2025 are as follows:

5th Feb • 5th Mar • 9th Apr
7th May • 4th Jun • 2nd Jul
15th Oct • 5th Nov

Tickets from wightproms.co.uk

The Comedy Social

Friday 7th February, 6.30pm-11pm

Get ready to laugh away the winter blues with a great night out at our next Comedy Social. We'll have three great comedians from the London circuit including popular TV comic Jacob Hawley, plus live music before and after from trendy Island band Mufti Day playing "noughties" covers! Pre-order pizzas and drinks too and make this a night not to miss!
Tickets only £17.50 on sale now.



The Jazz Social "Winter Warmer"

Saturday 8th February, 7.15pm-11pm

These popular events with their laid-back jazz club vibe start off in 2025 with the "Winter Warmer" edition, this time featuring "Mixed Messages", an amazing quartet presenting re-imagined new jazz conceptions of rock and pop classics. These hot tickets are only £16.50 each and include a glass of wine and a tasty cheese platter, making for great value. These events always sell out, so be quick!



Isle of Wight Spring Art & Garden Fair

Friday 18th & Saturday 19th April

The Island's first main outdoor event of the spring returns to the House & Park on Good Friday & Easter Saturday. The popular Fair, sponsored by Red Funnel, features mainland & Island specialist plant nurseries and a fantastic range of local exhibitors with art, craft and produce. This year we're delighted to announce that the RHS will be in attendance for the first time, with advisors on hand to answer all your gardening questions in the new "Roots & Shoots" talk tent. There will be free children's crafts and an Easter Egg trail along with our tea tent and live music. Watch out for chainsaw sculpture carving and other demonstrations too.
Admission tickets on sale from January
Adults: only £5.50 / 2 person ticket: only £10 Under 16's: free.



Antique & Collectors Fair (supporting MNDA)

Sunday 9th March 10am-4pm

The Fair is back for it's 20th anniversary season with proceeds supporting MNDA.

The 2025 Cowes Picnic in the Park

Sunday 1st June 12pm-6pm

This popular community event returns! Free charity pitches now available to book.



Review of 2024

Roseleen Cullen, Chair of Trustees, looks back at another progressive year for Northwood House & Park



As we move towards the end of 2024, it is wonderful to look back on the many projects, events, and achievements of the Charity this year.

However as always, I would like to start by acknowledging the contribution of the other Isle of Wight residents, who as volunteer trustees worked alongside me and the Northwood House staff team during the year. I particularly want to acknowledge the tremendous contribution made by both John Pollard and Diana Deacon - as they both retired from the board of Northwood House Charitable Trust Company Limited after serving ten and six years, respectively. I am however, delighted to say that both are continuing to support our charity. John is still volunteering as a gardener in the park and Diana is continuing to undertake our legal work on a pro-bono basis. I am also pleased to tell you that Janet Allan, Sue Collinge, Ben Hicks, Simon Dabell and Tim Wander are all continuing to serve on our board of trustees and were joined in June by Kay Marriot, who as a previous High Sheriff is well known to many of you. As a board this small team of volunteers continue to give up their time to take the Charity forward, thus ensuring that this wonderful heritage building, and historic park are here for future generations to enjoy. As I have mentioned in previous newsletters, the Trustees have been working on the outcomes of a strategic plan which was agreed by the board back in 2019.

As a result of this plan many improvements have taken place in the house and park over the last five years, such as bringing back into use the derelict and neglected areas of the house. As we are now halfway through that planning period, we are as a board embarking on the next chapter of that strategy which will act as a blueprint for the house and park through to 2034. Hopefully, many of you will have seen the wonderful work that has been ongoing in the park this year, including the tree planting programme which involved many local residents sponsoring a new tree in the area below St Mary's Church. We thank everyone who supported this initiative and want to let you know that phase two of the tree planting programme is being rolled out and if you are interested in sponsoring a new tree, please contact the office on 293642 or find details on our website. Of course, as ever we are grateful to our fantastic team of park volunteers who turn up in all weathers to keep the park looking good and to help us to get ready for the big events we hold in the house and park. You will see that we are hosting some volunteer recruitments days in January, so do come along if you would like to get involved. As you will have read earlier in the newsletter, work has recently been completed on the roof over the house kitchens and public toilets. Now watertight, this work will allow us to redevelop this whole area of the house



A sunny Cowes Week meant thousands of visitors flocked to the venue to enjoy great social events.

allowing us to have kitchens and toilets that are fit for purpose in the 21st century. Planning permission has been submitted and budgets and finances permitting we hope to undertake this work in 2025.

Most of the projects, restoration and redevelopment work undertaken in the house and park has been funded by our own revenue generating activities such as holding our own events during Cowes Week and running the Spring Art and Garden Fair. We hire the house out for many weddings, conferences, award ceremonies and parties not to mention running the highly successful Lawn Bar in the park and hosting many large events like The Wight Proms, The Isle of Wight Literary Festival and The Great Wight Bite. Supporting these large events and other smaller functions like our jazz and comedy nights all helps us generate the cash needed for ongoing repairs and maintenance of this magnificent house.

We do however, from time to time, also benefit from funding for specific projects and we were delighted to be awarded over £8,000 this year from WightAID, to allow us to purchase a large greenhouse for our volunteer gardeners to use for plant propagation. We were also hugely grateful for the funds raised by local businesses and individuals for the new park swings. You will see elsewhere in this newsletter some of the main events already planned for 2025. With the support of our wonderful local community, I am confident that we will continue to raise the funds needed for us to continue with the restoration and conservation of our much-loved Northwood House and Park.



A highlight of the 2024 Wight Proms in August was an appearance by comedian Miriam Margolyes on the lawns attended by 800 people, one of the busiest days of the summer (photo taken from back stage).



Northwood House Charitable Trust Company Ltd. Membership...a great way to support the House & Park in 2025



Northwood House Charitable Trust took on the sole responsibility for looking after Northwood House and Park on behalf of the Cowes community in 2010 after many years of neglect. The building was facing significant challenges, with dereliction and serious maintenance issues. We were at risk of losing the use of this historic Cowes building altogether and our mission was to save it from that fate. The Trust has worked tirelessly over the last fourteen years to make improvements and meet our Charitable objectives and we're making significant progress. But we can't do it without the help from you, the people in our community, who can support us by attending events, buying a drink at the Lawn Bar in the summer or by parking in our car parks. Proceeds from these activities go directly to support our work and tackle the next most pressing issue. But there is another way you can help us too...by becoming a member of the Charity in 2025.

Annual Charity Membership Subscriptions...a great way to support our objectives, contribute to project & maintenance funds and stay more closely in touch

Subscription fees:

- Adults £17.50
- Two Person: £25.00
- Student: £5.00
- Corporate: £35.00

If you want to support the Charity's work and help give the House and Park a long term sustainable future, then making a small annual donation via a direct debit membership subscription is a great way to do it. It's a hassle-free, cost effective way for local people to make a contribution and support the House and Park they love.

It's simple
to join
online!
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First For Amazing Weddings



From simple to extravagant, large or small, we're the venue that can do it all. Talk to us today...



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NH HISTORY CORNER



by Trustee
Tim Wander

SCOUT'S HONOUR



A fascinating insight into the role played by Boy Scout Messengers at Northwood House in WW2

From 1940 until mid-1944 Northwood House played an active military role in the defence of the Island, supporting the local community and hosting an army command and control centre located in the extensive house cellars. During WW2, at any time day or night, several boy scout messengers would be 'on-duty' at the House, playing a vital role in the war effort. Their primary job was to carry messages, including the reports sent by wardens, to other control centres in Cowes, or further afield across the Island should the telephone lines be damaged by enemy bombing raids and attacks. The scout messengers were only boys in their young teens. They had no protection apart from a steel helmet emblazoned with a white letter 'M' (for messenger) and wore a Scout ARP (Air Raid Precautions) armband which ensured they were not delayed or stopped in their duties. The scouts also acted as Police Auxiliary Messengers (PAMS), helping Cowes Police Force take their messages during and after air raids on the town. 'The Boy Scouts Are Carrying On' became

the slogan of the Scout Movement who mobilised in early 1940, as it had done in World War I, to support the war effort. Scouts were empowered to act as wardens enforcing the "blackout" from 1st September 1939. Heavy curtains and shutters were required on every house and commercial premises to prevent light escaping and making them a possible marker for enemy bombers to locate their targets. During the night of the 4th/5th May 1942, two devastating bombing raids by the Luftwaffe were launched on Cowes and East Cowes, killing many civilians and damaging hundreds of properties. From Northwood House, the scouts played key roles serving as extra firemen, stretcher bearers and helping to rescue people from the rubble of their homes. The raids intended targets were the local shipyard at the mouth of the River Medina and the Somerton Works near the cemetery. Just before 11pm on 4th May waves of German fighter bombers began a low-level attack, dropping parachute flares, high explosive bombs and incendiary bombs. As casualties were rushed to

the Northwood House Military Hospital, the staff were not able to deal with the huge influx, so scouts stepped in to help with first aid and make tea for distraught relatives. Some boys were sent to the House roof to spot for more incendiaries as they landed. It was a terrible couple of nights for the town, but the scouts played a crucial role to assist. When victims of the 'Cowes Blitz' were laid to rest in the communal grave in Northwood Cemetery on 12th May 1942, it was the scouts who helped dig the communal grave and also pushed some of the carts carrying the coffins to the cemetery. These were very brave boys indeed and their service is often overlooked in our wartime history.

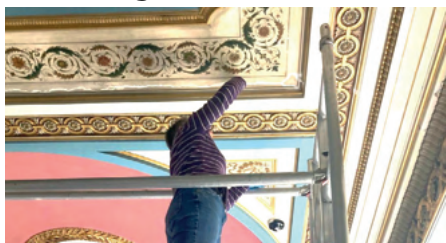


Northwood House & Park News Update

Charity to put disused toilet block up for sale

The disused toilet block that is located at the lower end of Park Road Car Park is being put up for sale by the Charity in December through local estate agents Spence Willard. The toilets have been closed since 2010 and the building needs to be repurposed for alternative use before it becomes more of an eyesore for the town. A change of use application has been applied for from the Isle of Wight Council which would allow for an alternative use in the future. Redevelopment of the building doesn't fall under the current remit of the Charity and proceeds of the sale will be earmarked for future restoration projects.

Drawing Room restoration



Following the full restoration of the Northwood House Ballroom in 2023, the Charity is now undertaking similar works in the Drawing Room which is known for its ornate ceilings and decorative frescoes dating back to the 1840s. Restoration artist Victoria Salter is undertaking the painstaking work on the ceiling and contractors S.Dunford are leading on the general redecoration before Christmas.

More tree planting planned for Northwood Park

A new phase of sponsored tree planting is planned this winter for the promenade area of Northwood Park on the upper side of the Aitken Tennis Courts. A number of trees will be available for local people to sponsor as the Charity moves forward with its mission to repopulate the park with new specimen trees for future generations to enjoy. The first phase took place on land below Park Court in the spring of 2024, with eighteen new trees being sponsored by local people. If you would like to register your interest in sponsoring a tree, please get in touch by emailing Cath at the following email address: administrator@northwoodhouse.org