



Isle of Wight Volunteer's Newsletter

Issue 4

Welcome

I hope that you have all had an enjoyable year volunteering on the various National Trust properties around the Isle of Wight.

We now have more volunteers doing a wider range of activities than at any other time. This has meant that we have achieved much more than we could have ever hoped for and this is reflected in the presentation of our properties, the quality of our conservation work, and the level of customer care and

service we provide. All these things, together with dedication and commitment have meant that Isle of Wight National Trust volunteers have won several awards for their various contributions.

All the staff are very proud of everything you have done and the real difference that you have made to the work of the National Trust on the Island. For this I would like to offer you all a hearty thank you.

Tony Tutton
Property Manager

We need you!

It is almost a year since the first volunteers' newsletter was produced. We are keen that it should be a *volunteers'* newsletter and so, with this in mind, we are looking for:

- one or more people to help compile the newsletter twice a year for editing and printing at the office.
- a volunteer from each property to act as a 'link' person, to gather information which they feel may be of interest to other volunteers and to forward it to the office.
- a volunteer from each property to take digital photos of events at that property so that we can build up a photo library and also use some in the newsletter. We have a camera which can be borrowed if necessary.

Hopefully by this time next year this will be a volunteers' newsletter, written by volunteers, for volunteers! If you are interested in helping with any of the above, please phone Heather on 741020.

TO ALL VOLUNTEERS & STAFF

"Mince Pies & Mulled Wine"

Thursday 17th November.

2pm –4pm

The Wilberforce Hall,
Brighstone

You may recall that earlier in the year we decided that in future we will hold the volunteers' tea party and badge presentation in the autumn, after the properties have closed. Then, in the spring before the start of the season we will

have a coffee morning to bring everyone up-to-date with what is planned for the summer. As we have already held this year's tea party we are inviting everyone to a Mince Pie and Mulled Wine afternoon as a 'one off' event to bring us into line for 2006. Long service badges will be presented and we therefore hope that as many people as possible can come along for what should be an enjoyable afternoon. To assist with catering, could you please return the slip on the back page of this newsletter as soon as possible, but no later than **10th November**.

2005 – THE YEAR OF THE VOLUNTEER – TIME TO CELEBRATE

Marsh Heritage Award

In June, Brian Marsh of the Marsh Heritage Trust presented a cheque for £1,500 to volunteers from the Needles Old Battery. This was awarded for their efforts in renovating the New Battery so that it can be used as a visitor point and refreshment kiosk for walkers on the headland. The Marsh Heritage Trust also paid for the presentation ceremony at the Farringford, which was attended by Fiona Reynolds, the Director General of the National Trust, many of our volunteers and volunteers from the runners-up (Tyntesfield and Camarthenshire) together with Trust staff from the mainland.

Year of the Volunteer Awards

2005 is the Year of the Volunteer, a year-long celebration of the amazing work volunteers do. One way of thanking volunteers for their contribution and acknowledging how much their support is valued is by nominating them for awards.

The Home Office, Community Service Volunteers and Volunteering England combined forces to award 2005 medals to celebrate 2005 being the Year of the Volunteer. There were five categories of medals, with 401 medals being awarded in each category, not just to National Trust volunteers but to volunteers from all other organisations across the country.

It is always difficult to single out volunteers so we decided to concentrate on the countryside ones. Paul Davies, Warden of West Wight nominated three of his volunteers who carry out what are often mundane and repetitive (but vital) tasks mainly alone and unsupervised. We are delighted to announce that all three, Phil Le Masurier, Malcolm Ham and Mike Howarth were successful and Malcolm and Mike have also been short-listed as regional finalist and will be receiving their medals at a special ceremony at the Guildhall in London.

Congratulations to Robin Day and Sid Bolton who were also successfully nominated (by Hannah) for their projects at the Needles.

Look out for next spring's *Active* magazine for a feature on these five.

We nominated five volunteers and all five were successful which is a mark of the quality and commitment of all our volunteers on the Island.

THANK YOU to EVERYONE

In September the Needles Battery received a Home Front Award of £2,500. This is to be spent on providing audio equipment to enable visitors to listen to edited highlights of 'Gunner Brown's' story of the time he spent stationed at the Battery during World War II.

PAUL RAYNER

We would like to welcome Paul who joined the staff based at the Longstone Office on 11th July as the Clerk of Works.

BEMBRIDGE FORT UPDATE

Alan Stovell and Geoff Giles have kindly 'volunteered' to give guided tours of Bembridge Fort and took their first groups around last Friday. There is tremendous interest in the fort and we are hoping to increase the number of tours next year, possibly holding some at weekends. The tours cost £2.50 each and if you know anyone who would like to go on one, please ask them to contact the office on 741020 for further details.

In the spring we hope to start removing some of the rubble and rubbish which has accumulated over the years and are looking for volunteers to help with this, as part of a work party, possibly one day a month. Again, if you would like to be involved with this project in anyway, or know someone who would, please phone Heather on 741020.

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT

During the summer the West Middlesex Centre Association purchased two wheelchairs for us, which are available for visitors to borrow at the Needles Battery and Mottistone Manor Garden. We have also produced large print guides for the Manor and are in the process of compiling photo albums showing the inside of the Town Hall, the Shack and Bembridge Windmill so that visitors who are unable to negotiate the steps can gain some idea of what these properties are like inside.

MOTTISTONE JAZZ

It was wonderful to see so many new people helping out at the event this year. After enjoying a balmy Friday evening, the following evening we were subjected to the wettest jazz night ever but everyone still seemed to enjoy it!

PLEASE NOTE next year the jazz will be held on **Friday 14th and Saturday 15th July** – this is two weeks earlier than usual. We have had to make the change because English Heritage are holding major events over the following three weekends. !

Tactile Drawings

Is anyone able to draw or sketch? Nothing too complicated required. There is a machine at the Regional Office in High Wycombe which can produce (free of charge) tactile / embossed pictures or maps which can be used by visually impaired people. However we need to provide the basic drawing and desperately need some help in drawing (or tracing) an outline of the Manor and the Shack, the windmill, the Old Town Hall or birds at Newtown. The drawings need to be fairly basic to go through the machine so if you know anyone who can help please contact the office as soon as possible.

News from the Needles Battery

It has been a busy summer at the Needles with an increase in visitor numbers and takings in the Tearoom and Highdown Kiosk. We have achieved good retail sales in our new look shop, which we hope to build on next year with an increase in our range. The recruitment team have done a great job getting new members; in fact Paul managed to get new 31 recruits in one day! They have also helped trial our new children's tracker pack. The pack allows families to join the 'Needles Watch' and learn about life as a soldier here at the Battery.

The catering staff, not to be outdone, have produced some fantastic home-made goods for our visitors to buy in the tea room and kiosk, in fact a certain Mrs Branson declared that the Victoria sponge made by Mark was the best she'd ever tasted! They have also

produced some great forties themed food for our special wartime events including VE Day. These events and special menus will be repeated in 2006.

The Needles Volunteers have been busy doing many of the tasks we haven't had time to do and keeping the site looking as good as ever, as well as giving a warm and informative welcome at the Highdown, which is much appreciated.

Looking to the winter we have the usual maintenance operation ahead of us, along with winter weekend opening at the Highdown 11am – 3pm 5th Nov - 18th Dec and at the Battery Tearoom 11am – 3pm from Jan 14th. We hope to see some of you over the winter after a walk or next season for some of the special events we have planned.

Hannah Griffiths, Custodian

Newtown National Nature Reserve

Volunteers

There has been a record number of volunteers this year, with 17 meeting the public in the hide, 4 walking the Reserve as Reserve Volunteers undertaking various practical activities, 2 as Survey Volunteers conducting surveys on Salt Marsh plants and in the 'Scrape' and 1 Discovery Volunteer ably assisted by 2 Czech students helping with the 'Wild Zone' programme. One Volunteer has been given the post of Assistant Conservation Officer with English Nature in Kent, helped by her work here.

Wildzone Activities

Again a popular programme with island and visiting families. The 'WILDZONE' programme has now about 12 events aimed at families organised in the summer holiday period. Some of the events have attracted between 40 to 80 people. This is a much more hands on activity, discovering things for oneself where all the family can join in. Wet, Wet, Wet

Minibeasts attracted over 80 people. Next year to avoid oversubscribed events a booking system will be introduced. The 6 'Tracker Pack' events using other NT locations on the Island have attracted 112 family members.

ECO-ACTIVITIES

Walks have traditionally proved popular at Newtown, but recently we have found a growing interest in alternative activities such as the 'WILDZONE' programme. With this in mind, an adult activity programme was started, called 'ECO-ACTIVITY'. This involves more detailed survey work, using a monitoring approach aimed at adults and students doing school projects. 14 people have joined in and events included: Freshwater Studies, Air Pollution with Tree Lichens, Grass identification and Mud, Mud, Glorious Mud.

*Dr Simon Young
Education & Reserve Warden*

DISCOVERING NEWTOWN BOOKLET

Full colour booklet detailing the history, geology and wildlife at Newtown. Price £3, available from the National Trust shop in Brighthstone or phone 741020 for further details.

No camping on the Saltmarsh!

The Spring high tide had arrived, so had the second high. It had stood as long as Neptune decreed and was about to depart seaward. It was at this very inconvenient time that a 28 foot yacht chose to drag both her main anchor plus a serious kedge anchor. So from being peacefully at anchor in the Clamerkin Lake, with the assistance of a very fresh Northerly wind, she was in very short order, transformed into an unwanted camper on the saltmarsh!

It was at this time that I came on the scene. The stonework of the old seawall was submerged due to the high tide and the boat, due to its lifting keel, dragged right over the wall and settled very nicely (thank you!) into the mud on the marsh.

There was one retired gentleman onboard plus a very energetic Yorkshire terrier, of a similar canine vintage.

Bearing in mind : the freshening Northerly wind, the fact that the crew was unable to hear my mightiest verbal bellows (and I can bellow pretty well let me tell you!) plus the fact that Neptune had just pulled the plug on the tide. So we decided to leave him "camping on the saltmarsh" until high tide twenty-four hours later.

The position of the "campsite" - it was all soft Newtown goo of the highest quality into which she would settled with great enthusiasm and more importantly, complete safety.

As the tide receded I exchanged mobile telephone numbers with the gentleman and despite the fact that his boat was now looking very like a text book shipwreck, with its bows now some 30 degrees in the air, he assured me that both he and his wee dog were fine. As the "campsite" became more and more like a visual shipwreck, I took the precaution of informing the H.M.Coastguard, just in case some well intentioned member of the public sparked off a rescue attempt, which nobody wanted nor needed.

Before turning in that night I decided to call the shipwrecked campsite just to ensure that they were safe. Upon answering the telephone he told me all was well and in the background I could hear soft music and his wee dog barking at the stars on deck — they were having fun!

The following day, prior to the boat coming afloat, we ascertained that the hull had to move sideways about 20 feet where there was a gap in the stone work. Only then could it readily be pulled off the mud and into deep water. It was also important that the "campsite" be moved that day

as the Spring tides had peaked and it would be another two weeks before we would have that height again. To make sure of the job we employed two boats. A small one to push the hull sideways and a bigger one to tow the boat off. But when the time came and the hull floated, it seemed to sense the way to freedom and bobbed in the direction of the gap and only needed a minor push to get it into its natural element again. And so the "campsite" had gone, thankfully without any damage to the "tent" or to its occupants.

A week or so later, the "campers" sent me a very nice letter and a kind donation to The National Trust. The donation being, as the head camper put it, for having broken three of the Conditions of Usage for the Newtown Estuary :

- :Keep within the anchoring limits and well clear of navigation marks
- : Don't enter or cross the saltmarsh by boat or on foot
- : No camping permitted...!!!

*Davie Flannagan
Harbour Master, Newtown*