

## **Lihou Update Newsletter**

### **September 2007**

One year on!

And wow what a year. We always knew it was going to be hard work and we were not disappointed. Having said that I really feel that we have achieved. The house is looking really good and eminently presentable now. I still see things that need doing, and I am sure that will never change, but its nice to be nearly at the stage when I can pick and choose jobs rather than just reacting to the thing that shouts the loudest.

As you will remember, it was almost exactly one year to the day that a call was put out for volunteers to come and help clear out Lihou House in preparation for the beginnings of the refurbishing stage. I was both encouraged and flattered by the level of support we received, on not just that weekend, but also the subsequent weekends during the latter part of last year and also the first quarter of this one. 300 litres of magnolia and 25 litres of gloss were splashed about on numerous walls, skirting and doors. I class myself as a worker but found myself in an unfamiliar role of coordinator. One, which thankfully, you seemed to respond to and the work got done. I spend many hours working on the house and grounds but it's amazing to see the difference a crowd can make in a very short period of time. Imagine how much longer it would have taken for one person to paint the whole house! Thank you for all your help, either small or large, it's still been fantastic.

I know some of you started to even enjoy your trips to Lihou on the occasional warm and sunny weekend afternoon and now you may be missing them. Sadly this has been due to your efficiencies in the early part of this year. By Easter after we had passed our fire inspection, we started taking some very keen guests and really this has been reasonably constant during the summer stopping the effective use of voluntary labour whilst the house is occupied. Also we got to a stage where it was specialist trades coming in to fit flooring, carpets, additional plumbing and doors etc. All this has now been done and with the vague beginnings o, dare I say, autumn, there might be calls for help on some tasks arriving in your inbox soon.

The house is now largely done inside. Yes there are always jobs that can be done and improvements made but these will happen at a constant but steady rate from now until, well, the end of our lease I suppose. I am currently working hard on getting the bathrooms up and running up stairs by the middle of this month in time for our official opening on the 16<sup>th</sup> of this month (I will come back to that). The carpets look great, the stairs especially I find. The water systems are working faultlessly it seems. The grounds are starting to look managed in large parts and the house is developing into exactly what we wanted it to be, a used and enjoyed building. We have had a number of school groups and scout groups use the facilities now and also a number of 'party' groups. These I have always been nervous of but thankfully they have proved un-controversial and non-damaging. Private groups using the house, at present, do not seem to be clashing with educational use. This seems to be due to the fact that private individuals want the house at weekends and educational groups want it during the week. Lets hope this pattern continues. We are currently reasonably well booked, but there is still room!, until just after new year. In fact Christmas is booked and have two people that I am waiting on to confirm a booking for New Year. These festive

bookings have only been made possible by Help a Guernsey Child who have donated another large sum of money for us to have batteries installed alongside the generator. Currently I have to attend to the generator everyday when the house is occupied and the generator has to run solidly, even during the night, to operate the fire systems. By installing batteries it means that the generator will need less daily attention, as it will be running for shorter periods of time. Instead of wasting fuel and creating excess noise and emissions we will store the excess power generated by the generator whilst it is on and deposit it in the batteries to be used after they are full. This process will happen automatically and is the first step of many to becoming more dependant on alternative energy sources rather than purely relying on the generator. I am personally very excited about this step forward and am really looking forward to seeing it up and running by, fingers crossed, the open day.

The next major projects are all just that major. In no particular order we have the decking over the old pool, the installation of photo voltaic cells and a wind turbine, and the biggy, the new roof. All of these will need a lot of specific time spent on fundraising for them but all offer major benefits to the house and project as a whole. We are anticipating these to be completed over the next 3 to 4 years hopefully.

One of our guest (not by choice!) was the MOD. Most of you, if not all, will know they were over on the Island clearing second world war unexploded ordnance. We have always known that Lihou was used as a target for mortars and tanks from the prosperity car park and subsequently we knew there would be some items still there. In 1965 the MOD cleared the Island and found 11 items that needed disposal. This year armed with better technology, they found 101 items. Now that includes any item that has even the smallest amount of explosive fill remaining inside it. Out of the 101 items, 17 were whole and considered dangerous to move from the island. These were destroyed using plastic explosives in a gully on the northern tip of Lihou. No lasting damage was done. Finding 101 items of ordnance was jolly convenient as they were 101 regt royal Engineers! I reckon they broke a couple in half! I was worried what damage 33 soldiers would do to our nice new house. Yes they left their mark, but no more than any other group. On the whole I was impressed with the care taken and their adherence to the rules that I placed upon them.

No this open day. The official opening is invitation only, but you should all be getting one, and a plaque will be being unveiled by the Bailiff to mark the occasion. What I would like is for a few volunteers to come over on the Saturday and help tidy up a little. This would include garden as well as house work. Nothing heavy and no Brown Tailed Moth I promise. If you wished to stay overnight then that is also possible but just be prepared to work a bit. If you are interested please let me know ASAP so I can sort things out. The tides for the Saturday are 2 until 5pm and on the Sunday, 2.30 until 5.30pm. This will be an increasingly rare chance to stay in the house for free!

Couple of other bits of news, Emma, my wife, has become the first person on record to swim around Lihou without aid. She did it in 1 hour and 17 minutes. We will be looking to make this an annual event for both individuals and teams of four doing a sort of relay to make it as achievable as possible for as many as possible. So far Emma has collected over £400 from her efforts. We entered a float in the large charities class of the Battle of Flowers and won our class. For those of you who did not see it, it was the Hanois Lighthouse and a fishing boat. After being paid our grant

and taking into consideration materials used during construction, we made a reasonable profit. Thanks to all those who us help flower. The Ball will be happening again next March as before. Numbers will be kept to 80 this time but any helpers wanting to help organise it please feel free to contact Emma or myself. We will be releasing for general interest, the program of fixed events for next year shortly. Please band it about, as this is an easy say for you to help out at no financial or time expense.

Best wishes all and I look forward to hearing from you.

Richard.



*Our Battle of Flowers float – ‘View from Lihou Lounge’. Note the borrowed tractor as ours broke down the day before! And yes I know the Hanois is grey. Ideas for next year on a postcard please.*