

**FRIENDS OF INSOLE COURT**  
**[www.insolecourt.org.uk](http://www.insolecourt.org.uk)**

**NEWSLETTER AND CHAIRMAN'S REPORT SPRING  
2009**



**AGM - SATURDAY JUNE 13<sup>th</sup> - 10.30 am**

As advertised in your membership card, the 22nd Annual General Meeting of the Association – the first since the reopening of the House - will take place in Insole Court on **Saturday June 13<sup>th</sup> STARTING AT 10.30 am**. Unless you are a life member, you will need to pay your subscription of £3.00 for the coming year by the start of the meeting to secure voting rights. Please see the note on the last page from the Membership Secretary, who hopes to get most subscriptions in by June 1<sup>st</sup>.

**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

**1) THE HOUSE IS REOPENED!**

There cannot be many members unaware of the success of our campaigning which saw the ground floor of the house reopened on November 3<sup>rd</sup> – two years to the day after its closure. Our alliance with the Llandaff Society and the Insole Estate Residents' Association has been put into hibernation – but like Merlin (or *Myrddyn* if you prefer) - it is only sleeping and can be revived if the need arises in the future.

**2) SUCCESS IN OUR HERITAGE LOTTERY APPLICATION!**

Our application for Heritage Lottery Funds to help us interpret the historic significance of The Court to the public has been successful and is a symptom of the increasing status of partnership we now have with the Council. The grant has enabled us to appoint a Development Officer, Lucy Williams – a past pupil of Cantonian High School with an anthropology degree and experience as a primary school teacher in charge of history. She will be freshly in post by the AGM, and her time-limited task in the ensuing twelve months will be to help us put in place the following:-

- a body of volunteer “welcomers” to guide visitors - and to provide continuity once she has finished (*See '50+ Group' below*)
- a range of easily accessed and exhibited information about the house, the gardens and the Insoles, suitable for casual visitors to appreciate.
- a set of more in depth information suitable for study groups. This might take the form of educational material and an archive of all that is known about the Insoles' story, and the great coal-exporting years of Cardiff which they exemplify.
- An enhanced place for the Court in the City's tourist publicity publications.

- links with heritage bodies in the Rhondda and Cardiff's dockland to make The Court part of the South Wales network of heritage trails.

### 3) SWISS WING TO BE REOPENED BY MARCH 2010

Our Alliance's pressure for the Council to re-open the Swiss Wing has born fruit in the form of £200k in the budget in 2009/10. The plan is for it to be spent on making the wing fire-safe, installing additional toilets and freeing up the Octagonal Tower as a base for the Heritage Centre. We shall need to be vigilant to ensure that the significant heritage assets of the Butler's safe and Housekeeper's secure cupboard are not tampered with in the process. The timetable we have been shown aims to see this wing opened in March 2010

Looking ahead to 2010/11...The Council have put £50k aside for spending on the Conservatory on western the side of the house.

### 3) THE 50+ GROUP:

Our first activity once the house was reopened was to run taster sessions for a '50+' group organised by Yvonne Apsitis with cash help from Age Concern.

This has developed a life of its own – meeting in the Maesmawr Room on Wednesday mornings to hear a range of stimulating speakers - punctuated with "Insole Heritage" days designed to equip volunteers to welcome visitors to the house. Despite the name people under 50 are welcome. We have between 20 and 50 people attending regularly.

### 4) VOLUNTEERS' RECRUITING MEETING 17<sup>TH</sup> JUNE – 2.00 pm

As part of the Heritage project we are committed to building an enthusiastic team of volunteers who will welcome visitors to Insole Court. Could you be one of them?

- You will need to be a committed member of the Friends, willing to take a real interest in the house, the Insole family and their role in the industrial heritage of South Wales.
- You will need to enjoy meeting people and sharing this rich heritage with them.
- You will need to commit a few hours each month to be a welcomers /Guide.
- FIC will provide all the training
- Would you like to know more? Join us in the Maesmawr room at 2.00 pm on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> June or contact Lucy Williams, Development Officer at Insole Court.  
E-mail: [insole\\_closure@btinternet.com](mailto:insole_closure@btinternet.com)

Yvonne Apsitis, our "Volunteers' Co-ordinator" will report further on this at the AGM

"Council" Volunteers working in the Pantry: Since this involves responsibility for food hygiene and cash handling, pantry volunteers have to be formally engaged, trained and managed by the Andrew Phillips, Manager of the house on behalf of the County Council. We are told that the insurance uncertainties that have delayed this project have now been overcome, and we expect Andrew to be in contact shortly with those who have put their names forward. If this interests you, please contact Andrew on 029 2062757

### 5) PLANS TO RESTORE THE KITCHEN GARDEN

We are excited by the prospect of following the example of the National Trust by restoring the old Glasshouse area at the east of the house to productive use as a **Community Kitchen Garden**. There is a growing commitment on the part of the Parks management to achieve this *if we can bring together a body of people with whom they can*

*co-operate.* We have a dozen names already and we expect these to develop into a coherent group as the year progresses. John Isaacs has undertaken to lead on this for the time being. If this project interests you, please sign up to be kept informed by contacting John or by e-mailing [insole\\_closure@btinternet.com](mailto:insole_closure@btinternet.com).

The Parks Department have already cleared some undergrowth and planted three apple trees, and plans are laid to clear the overgrown trees which were initially planted for nursery purposes but have been allowed to grow unchecked for more than twenty years.

In an associated move, **The Welsh College of Horticulture** – concerned at the vacuum left by the closure of the horticulture course at UWIC, have opened conversation with us and the Parks Manager about the possibility of establishing a range of courses for amateurs based at The Court that might have significance both for the kitchen garden and other unfulfilled dreams such as the Sensory Garden proposed some years ago.

## **6) SUMMER SUNDAY PICNICS**

Our second summer of Sunday Picnics repeated the success of the previous year. We were able to afford live bands and storytellers thanks to help from: St Davids2, City Council & Academi, plus the following Llandaff traders: Stewart Greenberg, Rainbow Toyshop, The Black Lion, John Williams, The Great Wall, Garlands and Kalla Bella. Once again, hundreds of people turned up with their picnics and groundsheets to listen to the bands on four Sundays in July & August. As usual ‘The Luck of the Insoles’ kept the rain at bay – contradicting even the most unpromising of forecasts. These events continue to bring a whole new generation of people into the orbit of FIC.

**We intend to do it again this summer, on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>.** We hope it will prove possible to have the house open with guided tours available for visitors.

**The House Manager will also run an ‘open day’ at a date in July not yet determined.**

## **7) CHAMBER MUSIC IN THE PANELLED ROOM**

(Now named the “George Insole Room” after its builder, George Frederick Insole)

Our season of monthly concerts on “Third Thursdays” is proving a great success. We have more than broken even financially, and our thanks are due to the Arts Council of Wales’ “Night Out” scheme that has made it possible to afford the WNBO-based *Ensemble Gwalia*” and the *Absolute Zero* Viola Quartet.

## **8) THE FATE OF THE STABLE BLOCK**

Many of you will have been present at the public consultation on the Council’s intention of selling off the Stable Block for housing to raise capital for restoring the house.

Our SGM on 11<sup>th</sup> October 2008 voted overwhelmingly to oppose this development, and to urge the Council to undertake a feasibility study aimed at keeping the site in the public domain and developing it for the benefit of the whole site.

A well-attended public consultation meeting run by the Council endorsed the strong argument contained in the paper we presented. At the time of writing, the Council has not determined its response, but we expect them to do so during July.

## **9) GUIDED WALKS PUT THE COURT ON THE MAP**

As part of the Cardiff-wide “Guided Walks in the Parks” programme there is now a FIC-led walk for the third Wednesday of each month from April 15th to Nov 18th. These start with an exploration of Insole Court gardens, and then, via ‘the ash path’

from Fairwater Road to Llantrisant Rd, down Highfields Steps to the bridge at Hailey Park; thence, back along the river past the Rowing Club to the weir and the Cathedral before taking in the Bishop's Castle and the monuments on the Green en route back to Insole Court. It takes about 2 1/2 hours. John Isaacs arranged training for leaders at a session of the 50+ group. The walk is advertised throughout the city and puts us officially 'on the map' at last.

We have a leaflet describing this walk and its places of interest available at 50p

## 10) [WWW.INSOLECOURT.ORG.UK](http://WWW.INSOLECOURT.ORG.UK) GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

Thanks to the efforts of Liz and James Prescott, we now have an excellent website whose capacity to bring you the latest news is growing as each month passes. We expect this to develop rapidly as the Heritage Interpretation Project gets under way this year. Our thanks to Liz and James for fitting this work into their busy working lives.

### A NOTE FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE DUE

If you are a Life Member or have a standing order with your bank to pay your annual subscription automatically, please disregard this notice.

#### THE MEMBERSHIP YEAR BEGINS AT THE AGM

Please help the AGM to get started punctually  
by renewing your subscription in advance of the 13<sup>th</sup> June AGM

The current rates are:

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP £3 (Unchanged)**

(You can choose to pay 3 or 5 years in advance to save the bother of annual renewal)

**OR TAKE LIFE MEMBERSHIP FOR £30**

**WE WANT TO ENCOURAGE ANNUAL STANDING ORDER PAYMENTS.**

If you are willing to assist us in this way, please contact me

☎ 02920 566 083 or e-mail [alunsalisbury@uwclub.net](mailto:alunsalisbury@uwclub.net)

Cheques (*payable to "The Friends of Insole Court"*) can be sent to:

F.I.C., c/o Alun Salisbury, Membership Secretary,  
2 Thistle Way, Llandaf, Cardiff CF5 2BU

### NEWSLETTERS AND INFORMATION BY E-MAIL

The IT revolution means that we can provide members with broadband a more frequent information service than the traditional newsletter delivered two or three times a year by our dedicated but small band of distributors.

We shall, of course, always deliver these newsletters, but our activities have grown to the point where there is a considerable advantage in being able to keep members informed of developments more frequently than this can achieve.

May I appeal to all members who can do so to send their email addresses to me at  
[alunsalisbury@uwclub.net](mailto:alunsalisbury@uwclub.net)

Equally, if you receive e-mail and are friendly with members who are without it, you could help by telling them about e-mailed messages you receive from time to time.

N/B To reassure you about privacy: I undertake to always send group emails out using the 'Blind Carbon Copy' system which prevents circulation of your e-mail address to other recipients on the list.

