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# THURNHAM NEWS ~ AUGUST 1998

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**On behalf of John Jackson, Committee Member.**

Welcome to the **FIRST** edition of Thurnham News.

This newsletter was born out of a recent series of informal meetings between owners and the owner representatives on the Management Committee. During these meetings it was recognised that many owners visit Thurnham Hall from time to time and in doing so keep themselves up-to-date with what's going on and how the development is progressing. However, many more owners are not, for various reasons, able to visit regularly and therefore are not kept informed. So, it was decided that the best way of conveying information to all owners and keeping everyone up-to-date would be by way of a newsletter.

Of course a newsletter is only as good as its content, and whilst we do not have a professional journalist on the committee or amongst the staff, we do hope that we have sufficient literacy skills to get the messages and information across to you.

With regard to content, Fred Fogg has agreed to provide a regular input on the progress of development at the Hall and we hope that the management team will be able to keep you informed on what's on and what's available in the vicinity. In future editions, we are hopeful that RCI will contribute with articles, keeping you in the know about what they have to offer and the benefits available to their members.

We would also welcome contributions to future editions from owners. Please write to us, let us all share your experiences at Thurnham Hall or perhaps, whilst staying at the Hall, you have found interesting things to do or places to visit that you can recommend to other owners. Tell us about experiences of RCI exchanges, what was the resort like? the country? the people? Other owners contemplating an exchange may find it helpful to hear the views of someone who has already been there and done that.

Finally, when you have read this newsletter, please do not throw it away. Remember it is a First Edition and who

knows it may one day be a collector's item!

## **SINKING FUND**

A number of owners, who were not at the last AGM, have been asking about the Sinking Fund, so here is what I hope will be a simple explanation.

The annual maintenance fee that we all, as owners, pay is designed to cover the day-to-day running expenses of Thurnham Hall, including staff wages, cleaning/laundry, general maintenance including the grounds etc. What it does not cover is major capital costs that arise from time to time, ie major unexpected repairs or future refurbishment of apartments.

The setting up of a sinking fund, which is catered for within the Constitution, allows us to build up a substantial fund to meet future needs. Contributions to the fund are calculated as a percentage of maintenance fees and are flexible, in as much as in future years, if it is felt that a sufficient fund has accrued, contributions can be reduced or even suspended for a time.

Monies in the sinking fund are not available to

the Developer or the Management Company, the fund is controlled by the owners.

Sinking funds are the most common means of catering for future capital expenditure in holiday ownership resorts, both in this country and on the continent. Resorts that do not have sinking funds in place and are faced with major costs, for example, for a refurbishment programme, are forced to demand supplementary payments from their owners, over and above the annual maintenance fee. These supplementary payments are often in excess of £200 per week owned and have to be imposed each and every time a similar situation arises. The sinking fund enables us to spread the cost and avoid the unpleasantness of having to make large demands.

**NB** Collection of the sinking fund contributions is under the same terms as the collection of maintenance fees, ie failure to pay could result in your week of ownership being confiscated. Don't be caught out, make sure you have paid. Please make cheques payable to 'Thurnham Owners Sinking Fund Account' and send to Thurnham Hall.

I would like to take this opportunity to advise you that there will be two vacancies to fill on the Management Committee

this year. Fred Evans has completed his three year term and feels that rather than stand for re-election he would prefer to see some new blood on the committee. Mike Forth is also resigning because he has joined the Sales team at Thurnham on a full time basis and feels that it could be construed as a conflict of interest if he were to remain on the committee. If you feel that you can make a contribution and can spare the time to be a committee member, please complete the enclosed form and return it to the Hall no later than 10th October for inclusion in the AGM notification.

### **DEVELOPERS REPORT**

Congratulations to the Owners' Committee for bringing about the birth of our very own newsletter, and from a very humble edition number 1 I am sure that future editions will develop discussion and ideas on the future of the Hall and the part you, the owners, play in that future.

The official opening on 7th August of five new apartments by RCI Director, Steve Allen brings us about half-way through the development of apartments on the resort. Work will commence in September on ten more units, with a completion date of March 1999. Sales of new apartments are excellent

and at their present level I would anticipate handing the resort over to the owners in the summer of 2000.

Two apartments are being re-furbished in September.

The Priest Hide will be re-decorated and re-carpeted throughout and part re-furnished, a new kitchen will be fitted with extra lighting installed to the lounge and kitchen.

The Dalton Suite will be re-decorated and re-carpeted throughout with new furniture for the lounge and dining area, a second bathroom will be installed on the ground floor level.

The Restaurant will be closed from Monday 14th to Thursday 17th September to enable us to carry out some necessary re-wiring. We will also re-decorate the room during this period.

The story of the Leisure Centre is not so good. The builders have had to contend with a very wet spring and summer, and problems on delivery of stone cladding and have not progressed according to plan. At present the main roof is complete and windows are being fitted. The installation of the pool equipment and tiling to the pool commences on 25th August. I apologise for the delay, but we are pulling out all the stops to complete the centre as soon as possible.

I would like to thank the Grounds Committee for their splendid efforts on the gardens around the new block of five apartments. A great deal of thought went into the choice of plants and shrubs, and they complement the quality and design of the apartments.

One of the new studios, the Sutton Suite, is named after Bob Sutton, a former member of the TOFF Committee, which was responsible for the survival of Thurnham Hall as a timeshare resort during its time in receivership. Bob sadly died just prior to our take-over in May of 1996 and he, like all members of that committee, worked tirelessly and successfully to achieve their goals, and it was a great pleasure for me in naming the apartment after Bob. His widow Jessie, although not in the best of health, still visits the Hall as a member, and may I wish her well and hope to see her again soon.

This modest two or three pages is, I hope, the beginning of a new era. For you, the owners, it is your opportunity to contribute to the future of Thurnham Hall, through the medium of print.

***A few thoughts from Denise McGall.***

As Resort Manager it is my responsibility to oversee the day to day

running of the resort and to ensure that the standards we have achieved over the last two years are maintained. It gives me a great deal of satisfaction to see the growth we have achieved since we opened. When we opened in May of 1996 we had only thirteen apartments we now have twenty-one and with the Leisure Centre well under way 1998 will see an increase in staffing levels. Whilst ever mindful of my responsibilities with regard to additional costs, my priority has to be the level of service that you the owners and our RCI exchange guests have rightfully come to expect. It is appropriate at this point to mention the RCI Comment Card system which is the method RCI use to monitor and grade all the resorts that are affiliated to them. Those of you who have been on an RCI holiday will be familiar with these cards. Please do fill them out and send them in because they tell RCI if any of the services you expect on a timeshare resort are below standard, in other words they act as an early warning system. These comment cards are collated and a monthly report is produced and sent to each resort so that we can see what areas of our service our guests were happy with and any comments they have made that may prompt us to make changes for the future. I am delighted to be able to report that we

invariably get five out of five for almost all categories, the one area that we are currently lacking in is that of resort activities but that will undoubtedly improve when the Leisure Centre opens. It is very satisfying to consistently read comments like "best ever exchange" and "friendly, helpful staff, nothing too much trouble". Those of you who visit the Hall will undoubtedly know most of the staff and will I hope agree with the comments made by our exchange guests. Fred and I continue to be impressed by the commitment shown by all of those who work for us. We consider ourselves very fortunate in that most of the staff have been with us since the beginning, none of them had any previous experience in the timeshare industry but the knowledge they have gained over the past two years makes them very valuable assets. We know that the regular visitors among you like to see the same faces and to be recognised by them that after all is how a Club should be.

As we have grown we have found it prudent to appoint departmental heads who report directly to me; Zorica Babic is in charge of housekeeping and maintenance, she has two full time and two part time housekeepers plus an army of casual staff to cope with the Saturday changeover plus two full time maintenance staff

who also look after the grounds. Julie Franks and Shane Tinker manage the Bar and Restaurant between them and they have one full time staff member plus seven part time staff.

Because we now have in the region of 1000 owners, Mandy Reeves has been appointed Reservations Manager for the resort. Mandy is at the Hall from Monday to Friday and any request for accommodation should be made to her during this time.

If you have any comments or anecdotes concerning any member of staff why not send them in for inclusion in future editions.

At the AGM to be held in November you will be asked to vote on a change in the Constitution to allow for a Sunday changeover in the new apartments which are shortly to be constructed. We would ask you to give your support to this motion for the following reasons:

The Reception area is currently not large enough to cope with any more than the existing twenty-one apartments checking in on a Saturday as most people invariably arrive at the same time. We have in the last few months begun to commence check-in at three o'clock, but even with this there can be a

certain amount of congestion in this area.

Many of you would like overnight accommodation on a Saturday, as this is currently the check-in day it is not often possible. What we have found is that many of our RCI guests do not stay the whole week, especially if they have flights from one of the London airports. So if they are in a Sunday changeover apartment and they leave on the Saturday morning this apartment may be used on the Saturday night.