



FRIENDS OF THE CRESCENT GARDEN





Autumn Newsletter 2004

We won a Green Flag!!

The Green Flag is a national benchmark award by the Civic Trust. Town centre parks and recreation grounds, formal gardens, country parks, nature reserves and woodlands are all judged on their standard of park management and their contribution to the quality of life. It is not competitive, but the standard is stringently high, and most Green Flags are flown by very much larger and grander parks, with many more recreational facilities and amenities. During 2004 there are only 182 in total in England and Wales.

When Dave Ternent of Gosport Parks and Garden's Department told us he had suggested a Council application for a Green Flag for Crescent Garden, we felt we might be out of our league. But we work in partnership, so we did our best, producing detailed summaries of all that the Friends have done over the last decade.

Research and planting plans, maintenance records, 10 years of photographic records, the Friends' Constitution, the years in the Yellow Book, the Coffee Mornings, the Garden Parties, the AGMs, the articles in papers and magazines - *everything*, it seemed, was relevant, and was minutely considered before any Judges came anywhere near the Garden.

When they did come, they spent over three hours asking detailed and searching questions and closely inspecting trees, planting, wildlife habitats, the compost heap, the fountain installation - nothing escaped six eagle eyes. We became more and more uneasily conscious of flaws and imperfections, and convinced there was little or no chance for us. But the results were months away, and we were getting ready for the Chernobyl children's Party, so there were other things to think of.

It came as a completely unexpected shock, to hear months later that we had actually been awarded a Green Flag.

Listing Crescent Garden's key strengths, the Judges commented:-

"Horticultural maintenance was excellent" -

Everyone who's helped in the Green team (and Colin Gordon, who made the grass look so good this year with Gosport Borough Council) can take pride in that.

But their strongest commendation was for:-

"An exceptional Friends' group and community involvement".

So every one of the Friends has contributed to this achievement, whether by delivering fliers, making little eats, sweeping leaves, coming with gifts and Raffle prizes to Coffee Mornings and Plant Sales, donating garden tools, braving rain with enthusiastic enjoyment at Garden Parties - or simply paying their subscription, so often with generous additions.

Crescent Garden flourishes as a result of all your endeavour, and reflects the goodwill of a whole community. That's what makes it such a special place.

The Mayor of Gosport, Cllr Keith Edwards, is coming to hoist the Council's Green Flag at 11-30 on the 11th November. If you can, please come and give it a cheer! It wouldn't be flying without all your help.

The Summer's events *(a brief recap: more detail at the AGM.)*

1...The Garden Party. One of the best, we were assured by many. The new ideas for the small eats provision met with a wonderful response, and the Friends came in large numbers to enjoy a very happy evening. There was a great deal of willing and generous help from many Friends, which made for the Party's success.

2...The Mayors' visit. The Lord Mayor of Portsmouth, with fellow Mayors from all Hampshire,

visited Gosport to help celebrate the 800th Anniversary of its founding. Gosport's Mayor at the time, Cllr Mrs Iris Binfield, brought them to enjoy the Garden as part of their tour of the town. A coachload of mayors, all wearing their chains of office, is an impressive sight! We felt very honoured and speculated what a collection of Mayors should be called.

"We're the Chain Gang!" said Iris, with a grin.

3. Chernobyl Children's Party. As always, a real delight. The children were younger this year - 10 or 11 - and as always, exuberantly appreciative of everything. Christopher and Sarah Lock provided a very welcome younger input with the games - a great help and something we might aim for next year. Whoopee cushions, loot from the Treasure hunt, were working overtime with lots of giggles as they finally drove off in their bus. How we wish them well.

4...Plant Sales, May and July. These go from strength to strength; we managed some refreshments, and raised £600, selling at very modest prices indeed. A lot of earlier satisfied customers returned for more, and we were extremely grateful to those of you who brought plants to add to those we had grown; they added a lot of interest, thank you.

Next one? - 30th May Bank Holiday Monday, 10 to 1.

Any spare plants gratefully received!!

The Parish Celebration of St Mary's Centenary spilled cheerfully into the Garden after a special Service, led by the Bishop of Portsmouth. This party was organised by the Parish, which is including many local Community activities and groups in its special Anniversary year. Everyone enjoyed it, sheltered from some rain by the Friends' marquees which we were happy to provide for the occasion (as long as somebody else put them up!)

The smaller "Pimms tent" has had several outings for outdoor parties this year: remember tents are available to Friends.

6...A Lecture on the Garden... Friends of Brighton Royal Pavilion and the Garden History Society had an interesting Regency Gardens Study Day in June.

"Alverstoke Crescent Garden" was the last item on the programme, coming as it did near the end of the Regency period as the Pavilion was completed.

As a shared Ornamental Garden in a marine development it was in total contrast to the regal grandeur of the Prince Regent's seaside splendour. An interesting link, however, was the presence of Nash, the Regent's architect and garden designer, at the ceremonial launching of Cruickshank's enterprise. (Hampshire Chronicle September 25th 1826.)

A topical similarity emerged as Virginia Hinze, in charge of the restored gardens of the Royal Pavilion, gave her talk: both Gardens have reached a stage where

considerable overall tree/shrub reductions are essential to enable sustainability.

Great interest was shown in Crescent Garden as a rare example of its kind and many Friends' leaflets were sold. The audience was also intrigued by slides of St Mark's graveyard, where Robert Cruickshank and his family lie tranquilly alongside many often distinguished early residents of his "Angleseyville". Their memorials illuminate the history of the Garden, and Roy Harris' historical observations on Cruickshank were snapped up with enthusiasm.

7...Plans for 2005. The major reduction mentioned above will here chiefly concern Bay trees and shrubs, and will need sensitive tree surgery if the feeling of a natural landscape planting is to be quickly reinstated. It will be complicated by the established climbers and will take time and patience. At the same time, attention will be given to the southern boundary hedge.

This corridor of mixed native species links the two wooded triangles at each end of the Garden. Together they provide a continuous refuge for wild life, from Stag Beetles to the smaller birds, occasionally frogs, and hopefully still some Slow worms and bats.

We hope the specimen trees, particularly the old ones, will soon be getting their periodic special vetting by a consultant tree surgeon, and in partnership with GBC's Arboricultural officers the Friends will continue their policy of underplanting and understudying where it is

recommended. Trees planted - in one case moved - by the Friends early in the 90's, are growing well established. The 2 Mediterranean Cypresses are a case in point - we hope the Eastern one is now gale resistant! The scent of vanilla from the Mimosa on Terrace Walk has been lovely; it's still flowering as I write, and the Whelan's transferred Tulip tree has been flowering magnificently.

8...Subscriptions. Some of you have still not remembered your £2 subs.! Catch up by giving them to David Wardle - perhaps at the Coffee Morning, or at 2 St Mary's Avenue. Next year, we'll help you remember by giving you a receipt/Membership card, the colour changing from year to year.

9...Outings. There have been 2 really enjoyable visits; to Leonardslee in May, and in October to Kingston Lacey. Both were organised with serene efficiency by Don and Betty Cripps, to whom the Friends owe so much. We look forward eagerly to the Spring trip to Monet's garden at Giverny with two other lovely French Gardens besides. This exciting visit is being planned for us by Roy and Joan Anderson.

10...Dates to remember....

11th November, 11-30 in the Garden - raising the Green Flag.

Do come! Our Chairman Andrew Rintoul will be in France and sends his apologies, but has asked Don and Betty Cripps to represent him and welcome the Mayor. Some of us are considering continued celebrations in the Anglesey....

19th November 10-30, at 30. Western Way, the Coffee Morning.

February 19th 2005 The Friends' Annual General Meeting.

May 30th 2005 The first Plant Sale - Bank Holiday Monday.

June 18th 2005 The Friends' Garden Party.

July 2005 Children from Chernobyl: and a second Plant Sale towards the end of the month.

Finally, your Committee would like to thank you all for your support, and to congratulate you, on such a successful year for both the Garden and its Friends.

Wendy Stone

