



THE FRIENDS' AUTUMN NEWSLETTER, 2012

A Date to remember: the First of December.....

The Friends' Coffee Morning has long been one of the favourite events of the year – and it's been getting better and better! For the past few years the Friends' Team has produced Christmas goodies with style and flair, and worked hard at the presentation of the amazing range of gifts and other items for sale given by so many generous Friends.

We like to think we've established a reputation as a really good place to start that Christmas count-down-before-the-rush.... Perhaps with some jars of delicious chutneys and preserves - home made cakes? – a nearly-new and exciting paper-back - cards that reflect the beauty of our Garden - or an interesting gift, luckily spotted sharp-eyed from the medley on display.

All this, while chatting at a cheerfully Friendly party, with hot coffee and a biscuit to nibble while browsing.....

We've been thinking. Perhaps calling it our 'Coffee Morning' is a bit - well - humdrum? Dare we say – boring??

So this year we're giving it a new name: simple, straightforward, but with a hint of seasonal Christmas sparkle -

The first official '**CRESCENT GARDEN WINTER FAIR**' is on December 1 S. Mary's Parish Centre, 10-30-12-30. It'll be amazing: don't miss it!!!

Entrance still £1. As always we'll be delighted to receive contributions of books, bric-a-brac and bottles, home-made cakes and goodies – and, of course, anything you think might make somebody happy if they won it in the Raffle.

There'll be a flier nearer the time with details of where to take them, or how they could be collected. We're hoping your usual loyal support will make this a truly memorable event.

'In the Garden', from your Curator, Gilly Jaynes

"Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness" - I don't think so! Season of rain and watery squelchiness more like!

As you are all too well aware, this summer and autumn has been fraught with difficulties, mainly weather-related. We've battled with too much water; not enough water and now too much water again. Plants have not

flowered; flowered too early, or are just flowering now when they should have been in full bloom weeks ago; and don't talk to me about slugs and snails!

Enough! Now I've got that little rant off my chest, I feel it's time to start my report.

Actually, we've had a very good summer, in spite of the weather. We have prepared Crescent Garden for all sorts of events, even some that were cancelled. I mean, of course the Garden Party which wasn't held in June and then wasn't held in July either. **Please see item below, Ed.*

In previous years we have been judged and awarded the Green Flag for excellence in a community space, but this year we were awarded the flag without an inspection as we have achieved such high marks in the past.

On another wet day in July the Garden was visited by a judge from S. and S.E. in Bloom, who spent a couple of hours with us, and told us she had already secretly visited the garden some few weeks earlier- rather sneaky, I thought! We waited until September 13th for the results which were announced at the award ceremony in Ferneham Hall, Fareham.

Once again I'm pleased to inform you that Crescent Garden received a Gold Award in the Small Park category. In the "It's Your Neighbourhood" section, we were rated "Outstanding" - with one of the highest marks in the country - 96%.

I thought you might like to read the judges critique, so here it is.....

Areas of Achievement:

Crescent Garden is superbly managed and maintained by its Volunteer Friends, who enjoy the pleasures of gardening but at the same time socialising once a week. Other Friends numbering in excess of 300 contribute through their membership, and those living locally using the Garden which ensures there is no evidence of anti-social behaviour.

Funds are raised in a variety of ways including notelet sales, English Heritage Open Days and a Garden Party. Such funds have enabled Friends to design and plant an area of the garden in white and purple to mark the Diamond Jubilee.

Compost bins are made from old pallets and layered with leaves and grass clippings and horse manure is provided to aid decomposition.

Training is provided on the job for the volunteers, a few of whom choose to further their horticultural knowledge with RHS examinations, and includes propagation days.

A colony of nesting bees is safeguarded and the Garden is a haven for other insects, birds, a badger, foxes and squirrels.

Apart from grass cutting and tree work which are both expertly carried out by Gosport Borough Council the Friends have achieved a standard seldom seen in gardens open to the public for which an entry fee is charged.

*Areas for development:
Just keep up the excellent work!*

The summer hurtled on and our next judging was on July 31st when we were visited by National judges from the RHS for the National Final of Britain in Bloom. At the allotted hour two gentlemen approached the garden, where I was waiting, quivering in my now wet feet - yes, it was raining again. I must say that although they looked very smart - blazers and ties, grey flannels - you know the sort of thing, I have to admit that their RHS uniform did not help to still my beating heart! It would have been much more calming if they had been wearing their old gardening clothes and wellies.

I needn't have worried. After a formal greeting and handshake it was just another two gardeners wandering through chatting about the problems we have all experienced this year. They were very complimentary about the work achieved by the volunteer gardeners and the Friends organisation.

On their way out I managed to steer them towards Wendy Osborne's two boards illustrating all the activities that happen in the Garden and thrust an information pack into their hands - just to aid their deliberations and judgements later in the day.

At this point I went on my Summer holiday. It rained.

You may be wondering how we did in the Grand Final of Britain in Bloom; unfortunately I am unable to tell you as the award ceremony will be held in October, and like the Oscars, no one knows the winners until the day. We must be patient.

In early September we held the Heritage Open Days and although numbers were down this year, we sold plants, cakes, jams and cards, and all who did attend enjoyed their day.

By the way - I forgot to mention the plant sale - another very successful event earlier in the year. The National Garden Scheme was pleased to receive all the money raised from the sale of plants, whilst money taken from the sale of delicious tea and cakes went into our own funds.

We have been hugely supported by Councillors and Council officers at the Town Hall. This summer, thanks to Cllr Chris Carter, we received a grant for the cost of the Diamond Jubilee garden from Hampshire County Council, and the Borough contractor concreted in the new plant stands for us. Turf care was carried out by Darren and Pam as usual. We are extremely grateful to everyone.

I would also like to warmly thank Ian Drummond, who whilst innocently walking his dog in the Garden, was approached and asked whether he could come to our assistance regarding the Fountain pool, which this year had sprung a big leak!

Ian stepped up to the plate - well, waded into the Fountain, to be more accurate, and painstakingly stripped out the old and flaking rendering, to discover cracks between the Portland stone and concrete around the perimeter.

Ian filled the cracks all round with epoxy putty (and great care) then applied three coats of waterproof paint, allowing the right drying time between each operation.

So far – good news - no leaks!

Our little Diamond Jubilee Garden was established in time for Her Majesty's big day.

In September the Deputy Mayor, Councillor John Beavis unveiled its new plaque.

The accompanying pictures give a good idea of just how the Friends loyally marked a truly great occasion ! For reasons of economy all of them must be on the same page, so captions are as follows:

1... The Friends' notice-board displaying H.M. the Queen with a garland of Crescent Garden roses, on her Diamond Jubilee.

2...The Deputy Mayor, Cllr John Beavis, unveils the Friends' plaque.

3...The plaque itself, which echoes the larger one in the central Fountain space (installed with the fountain at the time of the Golden Jubilee.)

The end product of all this team-work is a place in which many find peace, pleasure and enjoyment.

We are very lucky to have all this good will and kindness - but without a doubt Crescent Garden is so much more than a small garden in the Borough of Gosport.

Gilly Jaynes



Autumn Covers 2012: Wendy Osborne

The front cover may not seem very eye-catching; leafless branches of the Mulberry tree, drooping near the ground: a growth habit peculiar to Mulberries. At first it seemed a good idea to remove these lower branches at the trunk, raising the tree's canopy, but a check with the RHS warned that the tree could actually bleed to death!

Our Black Mulberry was given by Mrs Maggie Christensen - many of you may remember her - to mark the 50th anniversary of D-Day and the Mulberry Harbours. Maggie wanted her gift planted with proper ceremony. It must be Blessed; with GBC ceremonially represented. I think the Deputy Mayor obliged her - and the Rector, Ted Goodyer, came to ask for Providential aid, wearing his dog collar and his usual twinkling, benevolent smile.

We were shaken when Maggie sent him home!

She said he ought to be properly dressed in robes, for such an occasion. Ted took this with great good humour, cycled home, and re-appeared in full panoply, to Maggie's delight and our intense relief.

The tree must have felt thoroughly encouraged; not many trees get this kind of send-off from Church and State, even at Hilliers' Arboretum. It thrived from Day 1, bearing a rich harvest of delicious fruit even earlier than expected. Maggie may have had something!

It was, you will understand, unthinkable that we could now risk causing this tree to bleed to death.

We sought more specific advice from the RHS. Acting on this, a Friend made us two y-supports with forked Bay branches, pruned earlier from Terrace Walk. Each fork is padded with folds of coarse hessian, so the Mulberry branches can sway slightly in the wind without damage. The ends were sharpened, and you can see the near one has a ring of bark removed to stop it taking root.

GBC arranged for South Coast Tree Surgeons to install them under the trailing branches, being careful to avoid damaging any major roots, and the job was done.

The branches fruited heavily this August, to the delight of many - even small children could reach their ripe juicy berries, making mouths and fingers bright pink.

You could be lucky enough to get a jar of yummy Mulberry jelly at the Winter Fair...but you'll have to get there early!

The Back cover; Crescent Garden, Summer of 2012, seen between showers - you can see the raindrops on the Roses. (A favourite thing!) A myriad flowers growing in profusion attract bees and butterflies; tended grass and swept gravel beckon you invitingly to a seat. There is a feeling of tranquil welcome here, and a decided sense of place – it's easy to imagine strolling over the grass, sitting down to enjoy it all, and becoming a part of the picture. So many people now do exactly that, especially on fine weekends.

Friends Events/Outings during 2012

That Elusive Garden Party – the one we chased all Summer!

Many Friends haven't claimed a refund on their tickets, some kindly telling us to keep it as a donation.

This is generous indeed, and greatly appreciated, but we are concerned that those who haven't claimed or said this should still be able to reclaim it if they wish. We'd also like to move on from the nationwide doom, gloom and anxiety of the terrible washout of Summer 2012, and begin to concentrate on a wonderful 2013 in Crescent Garden!

So - refunds will be available if sought until 15th November 2012.

Thereafter we will gratefully assume any unclaimed refunds are donations compensating for the loss of our major fund-raising event.

Please accept our thanks if you've told us to keep it, and our huge appreciation of any unclaimed refunds still with us by November 15th.

We're so sorry the Party never happened, though glad we made the right decision.

We also apologise again wholeheartedly to the three ticketholders we failed to notify - not our finest hour. We did establish how it could have happened, and hope it never will again!

The Friends' First Outing, planned for May by Pam Dimmock, was to Powis Castle & Hampton Court Castle, but didn't have enough takers - perhaps because it entailed 2 nights away? Let us know what **you** think at the AGM; longer distances entailing overnight stays are the only way to see great gardens beyond a certain radius, but there are obvious drawbacks, price being one.

Big thanks to Pam, though, who did all the groundwork, enabling us perhaps to do it another time?

Our second Outing was on 20th September. Here is an account from a couple who went on it:

'In the morning we arrived at Denman's, a garden designed by John Brookes, a notable contemporary garden designer.

After an excellent lunch in the garden's café, we moved on to Parham House; Elizabethan, and surrounded by 300 acres of Deer Park. Two very different venues, the contrast really enhanced the whole day.

Denmans began with a crunch!

The approach lane was too narrow and winding, the length of our coach could barely navigate the bends. There was a noisy and rather damaging confrontation, between a rear corner of our coach and some dead tree trunks in the high hedge, which effectively tore away the rear lights.

Lucketts efficiently and smoothly made a new coach available during the visit; no fuss, all was well: most hardly realised anything was amiss.

We all flocked happily into a wonderful series of spaces, open and enclosed, with a wide range of beautiful plants and trees.

There was a great feeling of exploration and discovery, with skilful planting to admire en route. Lawns and pools, winding paths, stands of stunning Birch trees, and clouds of late-flowering perennials in lovely permutations of colour.

Lots to tempt us to buy! Luckily most of the statuary too heavy to get into the coach – And a varied and delicious menu for lunch. The game casserole was perfect, on a chilly Autumn day.

Approaching Parham was an experience in itself; bumping gently through the deer park trees, we came to a great open green space, where a group of ancient stone buildings seemed rooted in the timeless landscape. It was as if our coach was a Tardis, landing us gently into another century.

No sign of a garden as yet – but the house....!!

Fantastic portraits, from stiffly jewelled, ruffed Elizabethan magnificence to dashing Regency elegance, included one that haunts me still.

A nobleman and his wife, I think painted by Lely. His face is red, choleric and brutal. His wife, thin in exquisitely rendered blue silk, looks pale and haunted – no, terrified. I looked, and thought "He beat her".

I noticed he was grasping a lock of her long hair. We sought out a guide to ask about the couple.

"He did beat her," she told us. "So cruelly that she fled the house, but in those days, even her family would not support a woman who left her husband. She found no refuge; he caught her, and summoned the artist who had painted their wedding portrait (she was his 2nd wife) – to alter it". The guide pointed out he was not only grasping her hair; his foot was heavily clamped across the hem of her skirt.

He had insisted on the humiliating alteration to the picture, to proclaim his total ownership of his chattel.

I felt a chill shiver for her, three centuries on.

It was an irony, that his advertisement of her shame to all who came to the house, was now bringing far greater shame on himself. But not a comforting one.

The house was full of enchanting things – we could have spent days taking them in - carpets, embroideries, tapestries, fabulous furniture, and wonderful paintings – in a succession of glorious rooms where all was brought vividly to life by flowers..

Beautiful arrangements glowed everywhere, their singing colours harmonising perfectly with the rare objects around them. A tall dark vermilion japanned chest was precisely echoed by a sunburst of dazzling Dahlias and Zinnias of exactly the right hues.

A collection of delicate shells, arranged in an intricate round pattern, shared a table with an equally intricate array of delicate fresh flowers in a round bowl, their subtle colours were uncannily the same.

I've always loved to look at flowers, but I have never seen them used to such effect, enhancing beautiful things.

We felt a bit weary after the splendours of the spectacular 160 foot Long Gallery. There was a tracery of branches by Oliver Messel over all, stylised like the greenery in the Tudor embroideries. It made us feel we were on a woodland stroll in a stage set.

We fully agreed with Simon Jenkin's description: "Parham is a house of magic" – but the thought of a cup of tea weakened the urge to find the garden.

Resisting this feeble cop-out, we walked resolutely around the house - to be rewarded with equally powerful enchantments outside.

A huge garden, acres big, much of it enclosed by ancient walls lit by dazzling Autumnal flowers and late flowering climbing roses. Here was the bountiful source of all the arrangements inside - I marvelled at the thought of having such riches to hand – no five florist's stems to eke out with foliage here!

The joys of the garden were extravagant, too many for available space. Since getting home, I've googled Parham House and seen ravishing shots of it in Spring. Please, please, Enid, take us back then!

And thank you, for a great day out '

(Enid plans another Outing elsewhere in May, details tbc later - Ed.)

Chernobyl children's party June 2012

As you know, we were unable to entertain the children to a party this year, as none came to Gosport. Local organiser Pat Unwin needed surgery and her helper was on crutches, making things understandably impossible for her.

Pat's good news is that Gosport expects nine children from Belarus in 2013. Helen Feculak, a Friend, and a teacher with 3 children of her own, has kindly volunteered to be the Friends' organiser for a Chernobyl Children's Party in June. Helen's address is 20 Crescent Road and her telephone number is 02392-360340: mobile 0790338239. Please, let her know if you'd like an input into a very happy and rewarding Friends' tradition.

Although the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl is fading into the past, the results are still wretchedly affecting ongoing generations of children of families trapped in rural areas which will remain heavily contaminated for many years.

135 places in the UK welcome children for a month of respite care which is of great benefit; it can actually prolong their lives. We're proud that Gosport is one of these hospitable places, and that Crescent Garden makes a small contribution through its Friends to a happy experience the children will never forget, which can do them so much good.

Gosport Heritage Open Days – 6th–9th September 2012

For the third time the Friends' of Crescent Garden were invited to provide an event that would be of interest to both the local and wider communities.

The weather behaved beautifully, every day was fine. 16 Volunteers worked to great effect. Informative tours round the Garden were enhanced by fleeting glimpses of ladies and girls dressed in the fashions of the time when our ancient Tulip tree was a newly planted sapling. More tangible pleasures were laid out temptingly in the shade of the great Cedar: plants in colourful array, delicious goodies, and an attractive assortment of cards, mostly reflecting the Garden.

The Teams' efforts were rewarded by the enthusiastic feedback visitors left for English Heritage. One or two even joined the Friends! But there may be a question mark over this event next year, as booked visits were well down on last year, and there may be cutbacks for English Heritage. Our Team's practical efficiency and cheerful hard work made all run without a hitch, and with great good humour. And they made a healthy profit of over £230 for Friends' funds.

A Garden for All Seasons

Our stock of correspondence cards with photographs of Crescent Garden is now almost gone – the last few packs being snapped up at the Heritage Open Days.

Folded cards with envelopes are quite expensive, though they make a very welcome small gift – say, for a hostess - or a small Christmas present for a neighbour.

So when new set cards were discussed, it was felt we should try the sort of postcards sold by other Gardens; no line down the middle or square for a stamp – so they can be written right across and tucked into a standard envelope; sent as a PC; or even be a bookmark!

Postcards of Parks - and Crescent Garden, as Gilly told us, is Gold Standard in the Small Parks category – usually tend to be of bright formal beds in Summer sunshine. Our Garden is a special, tranquil, welcoming place for everyone all year: truly a garden for all seasons. So our cards are banded in packs of 4, showing it through the year.

The Committee felt correspondence cards should still be available, so we have them, too, in packs of 4. Two each of “Wintertime” - snow-laden branches of a yellow-berried Holly tree framing a wintry view from Terrace Walk - and “Summertime” - a hazy Summer day, humming with bees in the feathery Lavender and roses surrounding the blue bench by the fountain.

All cards are excellent quality, beautifully printed, and we think they catch some special moments in Crescent Garden.

We hope you'll enjoy them, and enjoy sending or giving them to friends.

(We researched PC's at Parham House, Denman's Garden, the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) and the Post Office, and made sure the Friends' cards are really competitively priced. The TIC and the Discovery Centre said they would be very happy to sell them, and we'll explore other possible outlets.

So far, everyone's loved them – one Friend on the coach trip even thought we should mount all seasons together and sell them as a picture! But come and see them for yourself at Crescent Garden's Winter Fair.

St. Mary's Church, Alverstoke: The Christmas Tree Festival.

St. Mary's will be decorated again with Christmas trees, there'll be lots of lovely music, and seasonal refreshments.

Once again the Friends are supporting this very popular event by sponsoring a Tree. Our tree will be labelled “Crescent Garden” and decorated beautifully (and appropriately) on Thursday the 6th December. From Friday 7th December the event will be open to the public for a small donation.

Last year's event was spectacular; especially at night, when all the trees representing dozens of community groups in the Parish, were a blaze of lights, colour – and fun, too – some of the decorations were really witty! A lot of thought and planning goes into every tree.

(Anyone who'd like to help with trimming/fixing the trees on the 6th December - Contact Sue Simpson on 023 92580551 December.)

Your views and suggestions on both Garden and Friends' activities are always welcome, either through our Chairman whose e-mail address is – Pam Mawby <roger.mawby@btinternet.com> or the Curator, Gilly - gillyis@hotmail.co.uk - or the Secretary -tel 02392 582068 or davidmerritt1@virginmedia.com

The Next Annual General Meeting

Will be on Saturday 2nd March 2013 at St. Mary's Church Parish Centre, 2-30 – 5pm.

See you at the Fair!

Best wishes, from

David Merritt, Contributors,

and the Newsletter's editorial team

Our coming of Age Next Year: Stop Press!!

Please have another look at the cover...

The pictures say a lot about the Garden – but they also reflect the aims, character, and achievements of Friends of Crescent Garden, a group almost as unique as the Garden itself.

Your practical and moral support has underpinned and enabled this beautiful place, that gives so many people pleasure from miles around. Your good will and strong community spirit seem to have thrived and flourished along with the plants you have generously funded, over the past two decades, for everyone to enjoy.

Today, Gilly has joyfully received news from the RHS.

“The Royal Horticultural Society is proud to present Crescent Garden with a 2012 National Certificate of Distinction.”

Awarded to only six groups nationwide this year, it is for special achievement in the “**It's Your Neighbourhood**” category, which relates to community effort and involvement.

Apparently the support of the Friends of Crescent Garden was - Gilly quoted – “One of the best examples we have seen of hands-on action”. So we all really have something to celebrate, when the Friends come of age next year – Congratulations!!!!

