

FRIENDS OF CRESCENT GARDEN

MINUTES OF THE FRIENDS' 20th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

HELD IN ST. MARY'S PARISH CENTRE, ALVERSTOKE ON 2nd March 2013

1. Chairman's Welcome Speech – Pam Mawby

Welcomed everybody to the AGM and thanked the Mayor and distinguished guests for taking the time out of their busy schedules to be here.

2. Apologies – David Merritt

Apologies have been received from Jenny Rampling, James and Liz Sykes, Carol and Richard Wright, Mrs Judy Scard, May Bamford, Ian and Pat Anderson and Caroline Manners.

3. The Minutes of the last (19th) AGM Meeting.

The Chairman invited the Friends to comment on the minutes of the last AGM, which were circulated in the Spring 2012 Newsletter. As there wasn't any queries or comments the minutes can now be accepted as a true record.

Proposer - Julian Osborne

Seconded – Joyce Upperton

4. Chairman's Report – Pam Mawby

2012 has been an excellent year for the garden. Not only have we retained the coveted Green Flag, achieved a Gold Medal in the South and South East Britain in Bloom Competition, but for the first time we entered the National Britain in Bloom Competition. In the "Its you Neighbourhood" category and received a Royal Horticultural Society National Certificate of Distinction. I am sure our Garden Curator, Gilly Jaynes, will be reporting on this later, but we should congratulate her and all the members of the Green Team. Their enthusiasm and hard work every Wednesday is absolutely wonderful, thank you all, we are very proud of your achievements.

This year the garden has had an exciting addition - the Diamond Jubilee Garden, finished in time for the Jubilee Celebrations. A commorative plaque was officially unveiled in September by the Deputy Mayor John Bevis and his wife Christine. I would like to acknowledge the help given by Gosport Borough Council who installed the 12 foot plant supports for us, they certainly add height and drama to the space.

It's hard now to remember how dreadful the weather was last summer - cancelling the Garden Party in June was a very hard decision. I don't think any of us had ever watched so many weather reports in our life, there are so many out there now on the Internet, and as you know they don't always say the same!! So lots of worry!! So much organisation was hi place only to be cancelled, not once, but twice! This involved a lot of hard work by the committee and I would like

During the year Enid Billington organised a visit to Denman's Garden and Parham House and Garden that was very well supported. Our thanks to Enid for a wonderful day out. We had hoped to visit Hereford for a two day visit but unfortunately this was cancelled because of lack of numbers. I would like to thank Pam Dimmock for trying to organise this visit for us.

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This year, hopefully, we will have a wonderful sunny evening on June 15th to celebrate our 21st Anniversary. We will be adding a little light gentle background music and a birthday cake.

The plant sale in May, over two days again this year, was as usual a great success. The Heritage Open Days in September did not attract the same number of visitors as previous years however the Winter Fair in early December was very successful.

As always we sponsored a tree at the St Mary's Christmas Tree Festival in December and I think it looked wonderful.

It has been a successful year that has seen our close working relationship with the council maintained and strengthened - this support is, as always, much appreciated.

As Chairman, my load has been made incredibly light by the unstinting support of the committee throughout the year - thank you all.

I will now hand you over to Wendy who would like to talk about the 21st celebration of the Friends.

5. Formal Founding 21 Years Ago – Wendy Osborne

Twenty-one years ago a few decidedly nervous people put up a lot of small posters, inviting all and sundry to come to our First AGM in the Parish Centre and be a Friend of Crescent Garden.

In 1991, you needed a fertile imagination to see the place as a garden at all.

Just over an acre, it was a long narrow D shape, bordered by restored iron railings, courtesy of English Heritage. A central gravel area sprouted weeds. The only splash of colour was a red Poop-a-Scoop bin, sited prominently in the middle of the railings. The effect wasn't good.

Behind all this a thorny, overgrown and intimidating wilderness stretched 200 yards along the whole

Those nervous advertisers had already poked and planned, researched and drawn plans and pictures, and planted Roses in some newly designed flowerbeds. But it was still a long way from being the Regency Ornamantal Pleasure ground it once was. This meeting would put all to the test: would anyone want to befriend it?

A surprising number did. From this great beginning, the Friends relished the project and their numbers steadily increased. So did their support, in all kinds of ways. When a problem loomed, a Friend was there to solve it.

Legal difficulty? A Solicitor Friend sorted it out. Food for a Garden Party? No problem! Willing Friends were brilliant bakers. A major Fountain installation? Two Friends presented professional architectural drawings for Planning consent. Loud speaker system? Father and son, electrical and sound experts, cheerfully obliged. Friends walking for their health formed delivery teams, Friends who enjoyed visiting beautiful gardens organised trips for us all to go and see them. Friends gave generous Raffle Prizes, paid their subscriptions, made sandwiches, joined the Committee - and this was all over and above any gardening....

The Friends' activities, reflected in the blossoming of the Garden, also say a lot about the special nature of the community we live in.

Consistently backed by the support and partnership of Gosport Borough Council, all this collective effort has transformed part of our landscape.

Today, a 21st Birthday is still widely perceived as a watershed - a coming of age into adulthood - and it's hugely significant for a group like ours. Sadly, many of our earlier Friends have left us. Wonderfully, there are many new ones, and the current of goodwill still runs strongly, as your presence here today bears witness.

Every single Friend, past and present, can be justifiably proud of Crescent Garden, of its benefit to the whole community - and of the many awards the Garden has since won.

But perhaps our really greatest achievement as we come of age is the steadiness and goodwill of our sustained endeavours over 21 years.

Life has changed, in so many ways since 1992, but our first founding principles haven't changed at all: simply that we should take pleasure in the Garden, and enjoy being a Friend of it.

Our contributions, ideas and input for the future are the essential mainstay of a Garden so many people have come to love as a unique and beautiful place.

Long may it give delight - and long may the Friends enjoy making everything possible.

To a fantastic group of people - Happy Birthday!! (And for Heaven's sake pray for a fine day on the 15th June!!)

6. Treasurers Report - David Wardle

As customary on these occasions members will find a copy of the income and expenditure accounts on the back of the agenda and have had a brief chance to study it. Many will instantly recognise the usual format with the 2012 figures in the left hand column and the previous year on the right for comparison purposes. As I hope they are in the main straightforward I will restrict my comments to highlight a few of the salient points. A copy of the Financial Statement will be included in the Spring Newsletter.

Although as you can see at the bottom of the column the final outcome for the year was a small deficit of £169 as opposed to the surplus of £1351 in the previous year 2012 was a much better year financially than expected. As members may recall this time last year we planned to use up the surplus from 2011 and 2010 to help create the Diamond Jubilee garden area incurring a large expenditure. In the event we received a generous grant from the HCC of £2860 which covered the complete costs of the large stainless steel supports, the engraved stone plaque and all the new plants for the project. Thus we did not have to delve into our own resources. However we did have a significant financial setback as you are well aware we had to cancel the annual garden party for the first time in 20 years. The financial ramifications of doing so meant a loss of about £1500 in income which we could normally expect from our major fund raising event. Nevertheless even here due to the generosity of many members who donated their ticket refunds we ended up with a surplus of £667 which greatly reduced the expected losses. Thus this rather topsy turvey year ended in a more or less break even situation leaving just under £9000 to be carried forward

Under these circumstances the Committee decided not to increase the subscription charges for this year but took note that with the rise in costs of postage and printing the present £4 hardly meets the servicing of a postal member. The situation will be reviewed again before 2014. On

another point the costs of the trainee gardener have also risen and we are exploring the possibility of reducing her to one day a week instead of the present two days. There are other factors in the proposed change which the curator may cover in her report.

The accounts have been audited by Ian Gallett who is willing to be reappointed for next year. If there are any questions I will do my best to answer them otherwise I commend the acceptance of the accounts to the meeting. Thank you for your attention.

Proposer – Cynthia Barrett
Seconded – Joan Mackay

7. Election of Committee Members – Pam Mawby presided.

Details of Committee members were sent out on the back of the AGM Flier dated 8th February.

For the benefit of those who have not got the details with them I shall read out the names and their position in the Committee.

Pam Mawby - Chairman
David Merritt - Hon. Secretary
David Wardle - Hon. Treasurer
Gilly Jaynes – Curator
Ginny Whelan - Membership Secretary
Rita Rundle - Member
Pam Dimmock - Member
Enid Billington - Member
Pam Jackson – Member
Rosemary Harrison – Member
Elaine Martin - Member

All members have agreed to remain in post if re-elected.

A show of hands was requested, this showed a majority were in favour of re-electing all the existing Committee members.

Proposed by - Ian Gallett
Seconded by - David Cooke

Committee members will be listed in the Spring Newsletter as usual.

8. Dates for your diaries

These will feature in the Spring Newsletter (due out mid April)
Plant Sale – Saturday 18th May, 10am - 4pm (1 day only)
21st Garden Party – Saturday 15th June, 6pm – 8pm
Gosport Heritage Open Days – 12th -15th September 2013.
(Crescent Garden involvement is on Saturday 14th September only)

9. AOB

The audience was asked if they had any questions that they would like to put to the Committee?

None was forthcoming.

10. Curator's Report & Visual Presentation - Gilly Jaynes assisted by Elaine Martin

If you were able to attend the AGM a few weeks ago, you would have seen wonderful images of roses in full bloom, shady walks, children playing in the sunshine and radiant brides enjoying the garden with their guests. Of course, last year that didn't happen as the weather was cold and very wet! Instead, I took the decision to show archive pictures to illustrate the Curators' report, and not the reality of the dull and grey pictures I managed to capture throughout the summer.

In 2012 the volunteer gardeners were extremely supportive, and all the tasks we undertook were completed in record time. Our milestone events passed without a hitch and again we were successful in being awarded a Green Flag; a Gold Award in the South and South East in Bloom competition, and a National Certificate of Distinction for "It's Your Neighbourhood" at the Britain in Bloom ceremony held in Jersey in September last year - one of only six awards in the country.

As we are in our 21st year and are having a celebratory Garden Party as well as a special edition of the newsletter, for the time being we have taken the decision to step away from the competitive element of the annual garden awards, and instead, concentrate on working in the garden just for the fun of it and of course someone else will get the chance to win those prizes!

In my report to the AGM meeting I mentioned the fact that the Brownie and Guide Association within the Borough had asked whether they could plant a tree to celebrate Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee. Of course we were delighted to accommodate the girls' request, and as it happened, an old holly tree along Terrace Walk had recently died, so it was suggested that they might like to replace the old tree with a new (and live) one! On a very cold and wet - nothing new there - Sunday in December, after Church Parade the Brownies, Guides their leaders, parents and friends came to the garden and the new tree was planted with due ceremony. The Mayor and Mayoress of Gosport attended and it was a very jolly if rather "nippy" event.

At this point in the Curators' AGM report it was necessary to inform everyone of a slight problem I experienced during the autumn. It was noticed last spring that the orange tulips around the Fountain Garden were not as vigorous as they had been, and Wendy was still not sure that the colour was correct. I believe the wrong order had been sent not once, but twice when they were planted several years ago. Anyway, it was agreed after consulting with the Hon Treasurer that we could purchase new bulbs to replace the offending orange ones. As best we could, the old ones were pulled out of the ground after flowering and given away to anyone who was passing at the time. (I suspect there will be a flurry of orange tulips in the front gardens of the Borough this year!) Time went by and in August when bulbs were available, in the shops, I purchased 300 red and yellow bulbs, and 100 white bulbs for the Jubilee garden as well. I kept them safely in my greenhouse ready to be planted at the appropriate time. In November when I collected them I discovered, to my horror, that the labels had been eaten by a snail. Rather, I should say that the labels themselves were still intact, but the names had disappeared and had clearly been eaten away leaving no trace of which was which. I can assure you that a red bulb looks exactly the same as a white or yellow bulb!

What a dilemma to resolve - should I waste all that money from the Friends and not plant them? Should I sell them at the plant sale and have no tulips in the garden next spring? Well I did the only thing possible, I decided that I would plant all of the bulbs in one area and then sort out the different colours after flowering this year! So that is exactly what has happened and I beg your forgiveness when you may see an eclectic array of colours and of course, not forgetting all those orange ones that we failed to pull out as well.

We are looking forward to a lovely spring and summer with lots of happy events and people enjoying the garden; the heady fragrance of roses and lavender and the hum of bees. Like those archive pictures, it is essential to be optimistic, and I'm sure this year will be everything last year was,

The End

The assembled Friends' spontaneously gave Gilly a rapturous applause for her presentation.

11. **The Mayor – Cllr Richard Dickson**

The Mayor thanked Pam Mawby for inviting him and his Mayoress to the AGM. He praised the Friends for the high standard of the Garden and the devotion shown by the volunteer gardeners. The Mayor said that Gosport Borough Council are very proud of Crescent Garden and will continued to help where they can.

The Mayor congratulated Pam Mawby for a very successful first year as Chairman.

Cllr. Chris Carter, a former Chief of Allotments amongst his other responsibilities, also thanked the Gardeners for all that they continue to achieved

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