

FRIENDS OF CRESCENT GARDEN

MINUTES OF THE 27TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held at 2.30pm in St Mary's Parish Centre, Alverstoke on Saturday 29th February 2020

1. Welcome from the Chairman

The Chairman welcomed all those Friends present to the 27th Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Crescent Garden.

She also welcomed the Worshipful Mayor of Gosport, Councillor Kathleen Jones and her consort, Kevin, Councillor Dr Phillip Raffaelli, the Chairman of the Gosport Society, Louis Murray, Councillor Diane Furlong and Mr & Mrs Ian Gallett.

2. Apologies

Caroline Dineage, Gilly and Peter Jaynes, Gina Rowe, Councillor and Mrs G. Burgess, Councillor and Mrs A. Scard.

3. Acceptance of Minutes of last AGM held on 23rd February 2019

The minutes were accepted, proposed by Ian Gallett and seconded by Trevor Barker.

4. Chairman's Report - Elaine Martin

The Chairman thanked everyone for taking the trouble to come to the meeting on such a dull day – and a leap year no less! The year seemed to have gone by quicker than ever. Weather-wise it had been a strange year and it had been a busy time with the garden over the winter. The Head Gardeners and all the Green Team had coped with all the ups and downs and the garden continues to flourish.

We lost the Mulberry Tree last June in the gales and we have an everlasting fight with the dreaded Box caterpillar – it seems to be one - nil to the caterpillar so far!! Nevertheless, we won another Green Flag Award – our 15th, an outstanding in "It's Your Neighbourhood Award" for the RHS. Plus, a treasured Gold award in the 'South and South Eastern in Bloom Competition' for small community gardens. Well done to our fantastic Head Gardeners, Irene, Steph, Sharon, Gina and all the Green Team. Our biggest award is the pleasure that the garden gives to the residents of Gosport – we're always open – for a quite 5 minutes, a short walk or just to smell the roses. A beautiful, peaceful oasis.

We're about to start a new 'major project' at the eastern end of the garden which the Head Gardeners will tell you about in their report. I want to thank our two local Hampshire County Councillors, Chris Carter and Peter Edgar for their help with funding for this. Also, thank you Gosport Borough Council for all their support and advice over the year.

Our Plant Sale and Garden Party go from strength to strength! Thanks to the hard work of the Committee and Green Team. The Plant Sale was busier than ever thanks to Rita, Sarah and all the donations of plants and delicious cakes. A special mention to Cynthia who liaises with the NGS for us – not an easy task at times. The Garden Party was super – lucky with the weather again. Thanks again to all the hard work of the whole team. We have also been encouraging local schools and children's groups to use the garden for quizzes, nature walks and picnics.

Sadly, we have a few people leaving us today – Enid Billington and Jackie Askew from the Committee and David Palmer from the Green Team. We hope they're still going to be involved with us, but we are going to miss them all the same.

Finally, thank you to all the Friends for your continued support, we could not manage without you, and thank you again for coming today.

5. Treasurer's Report – Trish Kelly

The Treasurer presented the financial statement for 2019 and thanked everyone for renewing their membership. Without the support of our members, we could not exist. New members will always be made most welcome to our friendly group – please spread the word!

It has been a challenging year for our gardeners, following the 'box hedge' problems, our wonderful gardening team have worked so hard to keep the problem under control and have succeeded. We are so grateful to them. Consequently, our work to enhance the garden has been somewhat restricted but, rest assured, 'catch up' plans are already in place for 2020.

Administration costs continue to be monitored; we always try to spend wisely. Please note a further payment of £200 was made at the end of the year in respect of the design and production of our lovely newsletter and website. Regrettably, this cheque did not pass through the account until early in the New Year. Many thanks to the Gosport Borough Council for their continued support with the cost of our part time professional Gardener.

Due to the lovely weather during the year, and of course, the support of our Crescent Garden members, good profits were made from our annual plant sale and garden party. Thank you all so much!

Another year completed, it has been a challenging year but we have survived – with the help of our dear Friends of Crescent Garden and of course, the hard work of our gardening team and Committee. And thanks also to Ian Gallett for auditing the accounts.

The accounts were accepted, proposed by Anne Robertson and seconded by Joyce Upperton.

6. Head Gardeners' Report – Stef Fisher and Irene Buggle

Gina Rowe, Irene Buggle, Stef Fisher and Sharon Miles continue to share the Head Gardener duties and Stef reported that this is working well, we identify the weekly jobs before each Wednesday and have a list ready before the Green Team arrive. Sharon still controls the 'to do' list so that each volunteer knows who to ask each week and the system runs smoothly. The year has passed with both high and low lights

2019 as you know had a wet spring followed by a moderate summer. The addition of the leaky hose both in front of the flower bed under the railings and now around the back of the fountain has helped with watering enormously, we have had very verdant plants but also weeds!! The electricity points installed have proved very useful for events and hedge trimming, to name but two highlights, also the addition of a light in the shed has helped in finding that particular tool that you want ...it's very handy.

We're preparing to continue with rejuvenating the brash (east) end this year. Three of the bay trees there were identified for removal in the previous tree survey, these have now been removed. Also another of the bay trees at the brash end fell over in the autumn (across the the railings and into the road with only slight damage to one of the finials on the railings that will need to be soldered back on). We have plans to have the tree stumps ground out in the next few months which will enable us to redevelop that with the addition of another compost bin, screening behind which to put the large Hippo type bags that are used each week to collect prunings, weeds etc. which will make them less noticeable as you come through the far gate. There are also plans to rejuvenate the edge of the railings with a new hedge so that the view into the brash end is obscured.

The plant sale was very successful again last year, the gorgeous weather always helps. We are taking cuttings when we can, storing at Rita's house as usual so that we have a good supply of plants again this year. We thank Rita and Sarah for nurturing and watering all of the plants that end up in their back gardens!

The annual tree survey also identified crowding along Terrace Walk of the specimen trees by the bay trees, so several bay trees were removed; this has opened two new vistas along the back of the garden and these have recently been replanted.

We entered two garden competitions last year, the Green Flag Award and South and South East in Bloom. We were delighted to win the Green Flag again and also achieve a Gold standard in the Community Small Parks section. It was noted that we have taken on board comments from the previous year's judges to add some bird boxes and insect boxes in the garden. We hope to add more down the brash end when the work is completed with more insect log areas and a hedgehog house.

We would like to extend a very big thank you to Annie and Lesley who continued to give us advice, help and support throughout this last year and of course each and every one of the Green Team volunteers who turn up every Wednesday to support the work in the garden.

Irene spoke of the plants introduced to the garden over the last 12 months.

Another 500 snowdrops and bluebells in the green have been planted this month to complete the entire garden, we now have 1,000 of each and more to be added to the brash end when it is ready. 100 tulips will be added this year.

The two new vistas along Terrace walk have been planted with ferns, (*Edgeworthia chrysantha*), Winter Aconites (*Eranthis hyemalis*) and primroses.

Three roses were bought to replace originals in the Fountain bed. These are a pink common Moss rose, Madame Hardy, a white Damask rose and Pink Bourbon rose, Coup D'Hebe. We planted *Rosa rubiginosa*, also known as Eglantine Rose, along Terrace walk, a strong grower with single flowers and large colourful rose hips to add interest in winter. The compost area has been very productive again this year and we have a ready supply of mulch for the garden to which we thank Dave Palmer for all of his hard work assisted by Andrew and Ed.

And now I would like to hand over to Dave Palmer who is going to talk us through the finer details of composting!

7. David Palmer's Presentation on Composting

David gave his talk with some illustrations. He explained that in the western end of the garden, fondly called Compost Corner, were 3 large bins, numbered 1, 2 and 3, all open at the top so that the rain could keep the contents moist. During the autumn, all leaves collected in the garden were put into Bin 3 and left for 8 to 9 months. In August, they were put into Bin 2, turning them over to let in air. Again left for 8 to 9 months and then moved to Bin 1. By then it has become a crumbly, black, leaf mould. Its value was as mulch which conditions the ground allowing the roots to grow and also helping to retain moisture. It is a conditioner rather than compost.

In Clayhall Road, there is a field with horses and fortunately, we get the horse manure. The owners bag it up and leave it by the gate – we collect it. Andrew and Ed take the bags and mix it with the leaf mould in Bin 1. This then goes to Bin 9 and this mixture, together with grass cuttings, produces garden compost.

Lesley and Sarah feed the roses with the compost after pruning. The dead wood goes to the brash (eastern end) and put into large bags to be taken away by the Council. As you know the Council cut the grass and the trees.

David has visited the Veolia centre at Basingstoke when all the collected garden rubbish from Council tips etc. is taken. Some is used to generate electricity. Material such as that from the brash in the garden is shredded and turned by huge shovels; this will eventually be sieved to 10 mm size and used to make bags of soil conditioner to be sold.

Regarding the fountain, volunteers have to clean it approximately every three weeks as it gets clogged up with algae. The compost and all the work culminates in beautiful displays. We need to emphasise the work of the volunteers throughout the year. It's one big cycle. As Friends of Crescent Garden you enter into the cycle that goes on from year to year.

The Chairman thanked David for all the help he had given in the garden over the years including his expertise on compost. He is now going on to lighter duties. She presented him with a reproduction of a print of Crescent Garden as a memory of all the contributions he had made during his time as a volunteer.

8a. Election of Officers

Re-elected Chairman, Elaine Martin....Proposed by James Sykes
Seconded by Annie Sayle

Secretary, Gina Rowe.....Proposed by James Sykes
Seconded by Lesley Flett

Treasurer, Trish Kelly.....Proposed by Diane Furlong
Seconded by Ian Gallett

8b. Election of Committee Members

Re-elected Six Committee Members...Proposed by Pam Mawby
Seconded by Marie-Claude Barker

Ginny Whelan, Rita Rundle,

Trevor Barker, Maureen Bell,

Ginny Day, Rosemary Harrison.

The Chairman thanked Enid Billington and Jackie Askew who were retiring from the Committee after many years of service. She thanked Enid for agreeing to continue to organise the visits for the Friends. She presented Jackie with a camellia and Enid with a print of Alverstoke Church.

9. Visits Report – Enid Billington

Enid reported that last year's visit to the Temple at Neasden had been very successful. However, arranging visits was getting more difficult because of getting the numbers to fill the coach and also competition from other groups, e.g. W.I. This year she had arranged a visit to West Dean, with which many of you are familiar, and Aldsworth, a 6 acre garden with many rare and interesting plants.

This will take place on 18th June and the coach will leave at 9.30am. Coffee will be in Chichester at 10.30am, then onto West Dene for the visit and lunch. The afternoon will be at Aldsworth; we expect to return at around p.m. The price is £31.50.

10. Request for Garden Party Food – Rita Rundle

Rita asked for anyone who would provide food for the Garden Party to sign up on the boards which were going round the room. She also asked for volunteers to deliver letters to members

11. Invitation to the Mayor to speak – Mayor of Gosport, Cllr Kathleen Johes

The Mayor said she was thrilled to see so many people attending the AGM and with all the volunteers who gave so much of their time. People visiting the garden could enjoy the beauty which was so beneficial for mental health. She thanked everyone for supporting all the events in the Borough.

12. A.O.B. – Elaine Martin

- a) Felicity Anderson said that it was regrettable that there was no blackout for the slides. Unfortunately, these are not provided in the Parish Centre
- b) The Chairman reminded everyone that the plant sale would be on Saturday 16th May, It was unfortunate that there had been a printing error in the NGS Booklet, which gave the wrong date. She asked if everyone present could give the correct date to friends and acquaintances.

The Meeting ended at 3.45 pm