



FRIENDS OF CRESCENT GARDEN

FIRST ANNIVERSARY NEWS LETTER - FEBRUARY 1993

As we are now a year old, perhaps a quick look backwards may be forgiven. Progress has seemed slow, sometimes, but in fact we have, between all concerned, achieved a fair amount.

THE CENTRAL FLOWERY ROSE SHRUBBERY is now properly dug, furnished with benches and rose supports, and planted with the Friends' Roses in the positions suggested by Mrs LeRougetel. All the roses are budding well, after being pruned and mulched. Along the railings, 'Stanwell's Perpetual' is interspersed with small evergreen Alexandrian Laurels. This Rose is said to bloom all Summer, a prickly, arching shrub, with very fragrant pink/white double flowers, dated 1838.

After an anxiously droopy start, the two Mediterranean Cypresses (one planted by the Mayor of Gosport) seem to be perking up. At the back, a vigorous climber called Rambling Rector is placed to create, in time, a scented waterfall of clusters of white double flowers in July. One rose, a species not easily obtainable, was stolen over Christmas. A new Friend not only gave us a substitute, but planted it herself.

Round the RAILINGS Jonquils, Pheasants Eye Narcissus, and Daffodils planted by Friends, are pushing their way through the earth - hopefully all in the right direction! Small wild Daffodils are coming up, along the back of the Eastern 'wing': at the Western end, Bob Gray's little white species Cyclamen are establishing sturdy clumps. The Magnolia Grandiflora and the two Strawberry trees (Arbutus Unedo) have almost doubled in size since they were planted last Spring.

We raised quite a lot of MONEY, for a small Association - over £900.00. Better than that, we've had some happy times: the Garden Party; cheerfully planting thousands of bulbs in a steady drizzle, and getting all the Friend's Roses safely in. It has been a real neighbourhood effort and a wonderful start, with great support from both County and Local Authorities, who have welcomed our involvement and encouraged our research.

GIFTS FOR THE GARDEN. David Seymour, who was an enthusiastic Friend, gave us a generous donation last year, before his tragically early death, and it is intended to use some of it for a particular tree. (Jill has chosen a Magnolia Grandiflora).

At a time when the Rose Supports seemed beyond our reach, Marycourt School gave a very generous donation towards them, which made all the difference. Our grateful thanks to them, and also to Mr & Mrs Len Hayward. They have offered a donation for a two-seater seat, of early 19th Century design, for the Eastern wing of the Garden, a practical and very kindly idea which will be greatly appreciated. It is being made by Peter Clutterbuck.

Within the last few days, the Holleys completed some careful research, and presented the Friends with some lovely trees for the Terrace Walk which will add sparkle in the darkest months (variegated Hollies - what else?).

All these thoughtful gifts are presents to us all, and will give enjoyment and pleasure for years to come to many others, besides. Thank you, very much.

TERRACE WALK. (It has been discovered, from some Crescent deeds, that this was the original name for what we have been calling the Long Walk: it seems right to revert to it).

After consultation with Samantha Whitmore, of Gosport Borough Council, the cleared ground by the path will shortly be prepared for planting 24 shrubs, trees, and climbers, chosen to give interest through the year, and tolerate some shade, besides being of the right period. They will all have a struggle to get established, one of their main challengers being their neighbouring Bay trees which have already swamped out so much, and which seed, sucker and spread so vigorously.

It has been suggested that Friends might be 'minders' to one or two of these new-comers - just keeping an eye on them, and reporting any troubles, whether from drought, thieves, vandals, or the indispensable but thuggish Bays.

After the planting, any Friends who have spare roots of Lily of the Valley, or Primroses or Snowdrops, may like to pop them in here, as underplanting, (or let me know they are available).

RESEARCH AND THE CENTRAL PLANTING. This has been going on intensively - the question of what other shrubs and plants to put with our Roses is not just a matter of checking the date of introduction, the colour, the size, time of flowering and where they would grow best, though of course these are important. There is also the question of Fashion.

It seems that fashion played a huge part in flowers, as in most things. After 1770, newspapers all over the country carried advertisements for Florists' Feasts. These were jolly evenings in local hosteleries where Florists' Societies would compete fiercely for the prizes for the best blooms, have a splendid dinner, and drink - at some length - to Pinks, Tulips, or Auriculas, or whatever their passion happened to be. 'Florist' meant one who grew flowers, rather than sold them. At first, there were eight 'Florists Flowers', but this expanded to large numbers of varieties. People spent their lives evolving new versions of their chosen obsession. Pinks, for example, were feathered, pheasant-eyed, frilled, laced, single, doubled, trebled, rounded, smooth-edged, bigger, yellow, even, in turn.

Dahlias, once grown by the Aztecs, were taken back - with their gold - to Madrid. In the 1780's they reached France, but died. Eventually, in about 1803, they came to Britian. In 1815, the year of Waterloo, some new hybrids arrived here from France: perhaps some of the spoils of Victory? If so, Napoleon must have smiled sardonically on Elba, for they unleashed Dahlia Mania: by 1836 in England there were over one thousand varieties available; plain colours, dramatic stripes, with edgings, with spots (!) with flushes and streaks. Most were fully double: in 1842 someone grew a black one, and every Scottish village put red and yellow Dahlias, in triumphal arches to greet Queen Victoria on her journey through Scotland. A Dahlia Society offered £100 - a huge sum then - for the Best Bloom of the Season. It must have been spectacular.

By 1880, double Dahlias were death to a gardener of 'good taste', and hundreds of varieties went onto the compost heap and were never seen again. Well, almost. In 1928, for instance, a new variety, the 'Bishop of Llandaff', with scarlet flowers and purple leaves, looked remarkably like the pictures of some seedlings of the 1820's, over a century before.

By now, you will have grasped the problem. As so many flowers, wildly fashionable between 1840-50, have vanished, would it spoil our 'Period' planting if we tried to echo them with something much later, that 'looked right'?

We thought it was worth getting some expert opinions on this, so we wrote to John Sales, who is the Chief Gardens Adviser to the National Trust, and to Mrs Batey, the President of the Garden History Society, who has already visited the Garden. We had kind and extremely helpful letters from them both, and their advice was summed up neatly in Mr Sales' sentence:-

"With a total restoration to a particular design, period and style (which is comparatively rare for the National Trust) we would certainly substitute the nearest possible modern cultivar for the original (if known), while making every effort to obtain contemporary kinds."

So we can have the ravishing Bishop, in front of our Leggy Hollyhocks (very trendy in 1840, especially paired with Dahlias).

There is no doubt that Robert Cruickshank would have approved: between 1830 and 1840 he was trying to make "Angleseyville" a very fashionable watering place indeed.

We have found a specialist Nursery (^{VIEW} SOUTHDOWN) at Eversley Cross, Hampshire, which grows old plants. The owners, Mark and Elaine Trenear, have been to see the Garden, are very enthusiastic about it, and practically helpful. They supply plants to the National Trust, and are happy to deal direct with Local Authorities. Mark Trenear said at once that Pinks would do better facing South, along the wavy edge by the railings, than on the curved inside edge, where they would be shaded by the Roses, and grow straggly. One point - old varieties are not necessarily more expensive - just harder to find!

THE SOAKAWAYS. After much debate, it has been decided to record these carefully, but leave them covered for the time being, as they always have been.

DOGS. All the year, we have been requesting a bye-law to cover the Garden, as it does the pavement. Without one, many dog-owners bring their dogs here precisely because there is not one, and they need not clear up. As a result, there is so much dog faeces it is becoming a threat to health, especially that of small children, for whom the Garden is otherwise such a safe place to play. We are thinking of a small Campaign to underline this, which may have begun by the time you get this. Anyone who feels strongly - and many Friends do - would help by writing to one of our Councillors: the more letters the better, to ask for a bye-law.

THE GARDEN PARTY. This will be on the ~~19th~~ 26th June. (If you know a Sun-Dance, please come and do it).

SUBSCRIPTIONS. These are now due, at £1.00 per head. Would you please put your name on the accompanying slip, and put it, with your subscription, into either Nos 20 or 21 Crescent Road.

We hope you feel your money so far has been well-spent. It has, as we all hoped, meant that the Garden has begun to be a special one, unlike any other; and it has enabled us to establish a good working relationship with Goport and Hampshire Authorities. But, especially in this next year of stocking the Garden, we do need more funds. We would be delighted if anyone has any fund-raising suggestions - either at the Garden Party or at other times - and would be very grateful for any small addition to subscriptions.

Our Treasurer, Mrs Jill Parry is of course happy to show the Association's accounts to any Friends who would like to see them (20 Crescent Road).

THE STEERING GROUP. This is not a formal, fixed Committee. Any Friend is welcome to come and join us at any meeting, especially if they feel they may have something to contribute, or suggest.

Finally, remember the first and most important aspect of being a Friend of Crescent Garden is that of enjoying it. If a garden is loved, it will be cherished, but - in spite of vigilance and care - we will inevitably get some vandalism, irresponsible dog-owners, carelessly destructive children. All these things are facts of life. It is no good getting angry or upset, there is nothing that diminishes enjoyment more.

Neither should Friends feel in the least apologetic that they haven't time, or strength, to do much to help. Picking up one bit of litter, dead-heading one Rose Bush - or simply sitting and taking pleasure in the Garden, as it slowly regains the colours and scents of over 150 years ago - all these things really count when a whole neighbourhood is doing them. It is the solidarity of your support that makes all the difference.

Wendy Osborne
21 Crescent Road

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I enclose my/our subscription(s), of £1.00 per person, to Friends of Crescent Garden.

I would/would not be happy to keep an eye on a newly planted tree or shrub.

Name

Address
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