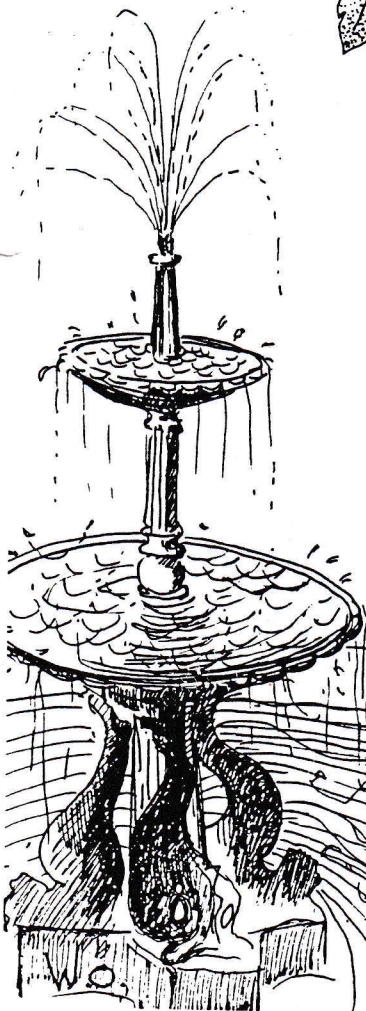
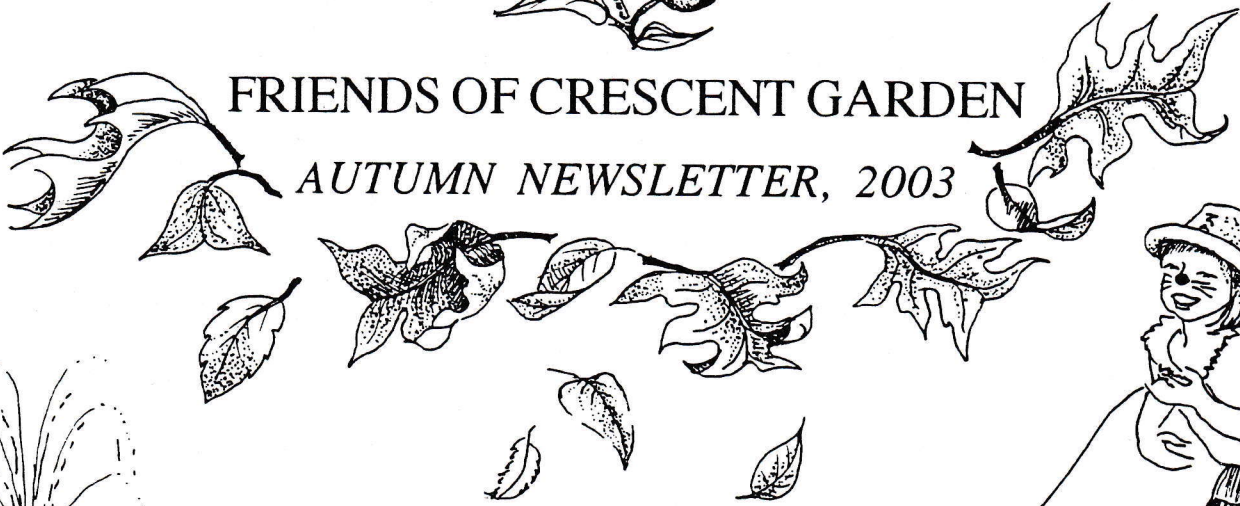


FRIENDS OF CRESCENT GARDEN
AUTUMN NEWSLETTER, 2003



First things first!

THE COFFEE MORNING

**Looking forward to seeing you!!!
21st November, 10-30 at 30 Western Way,
at the kind invitation of Don and Betty Cripps.
The Friends' great start to the Festive Season!!
Coffee and Biscuits: Entry £1.**

As usual, we'll be truly grateful for Raffle prizes, Bric-a-Brac, Bottles and Produce, to make up the Friends' traditional **Splendid Array**.

RAFFLE PRIZES - go to Rita Rundle, at 12 Crescent Rd.

PRODUCE - if not brought on the day, goes to Jill Parry, at 20 Crescent Rd.

BOTTLES - To David Wardle, 2 St. Mary's Avenue.

BRIC-A-BRAC, please, to Jill Streatfield -James at Rosery Cottage, The Lane, or to 21 Crescent Rd. (You could leave them safely in the porch.)

This Newsletter is the **LAST REMINDER** - please don't miss it!

We hoped for coloured photographs on the cover, but ours aren't digital, so wouldn't transfer well. But the drawings, clockwise from top left, give some idea of them.

The Tulips Our 3,000 bulbs just showed before the Spring Newsletter. Very exciting, the red and yellow flowers were magnificent - but then 1,000 'Couleur de Cardinal' weren't like a crimson robe at all, but a modern pallid shade of pink.

The News boards proclaimed "Shocking Pink Bloomers In Gosport!" (a bit of light relief from Iraq). The Dutch suppliers said they were *desolated*; and would replace the bloomers this Autumn. All we had to do was to enjoy the wrong ones - then lift them - and plant 1,000 Cardinals this month. Watch this space!

The excited small boy is from Chernobyl, one of twelve who spent a month with kind Gosport families. They came to a party in the Garden given by some Friends. A great time was had by all - especially the hosts. They all sang and danced for us, and threw themselves into the games and races with an enthusiasm delightful to see. The tea went down pretty well, too, and they loved the Treasure Hunt. Their health is wonderfully improved by just a month here; it made us reflect how fortunate we are.

The Plant Sale was a new venture this year. Some Friends kindly added spare plants from their gardens, and several keen local gardeners actually discovered the Garden through this event, and loved it. A very cheerful, encouraging morning; at £1 per plant we made £260! . Such a success; we're planning two in 2004, on the May Bank Holiday, and in July: Thanks to the Mackay's very generous gift of a greenhouse, all kinds of interesting things are planned: we're so grateful to them.

The Pussy-cat with a balloon was a guest at one of several small childrens' Birthday Parties in the Garden this lovely Summer. Organised by parents, but the Friends' are very happy to put up a tea-tent for a donation; it's a joy to see the Garden used this way.

The two little boys came with their mothers one sunny morning when I was raking the gravel by the pool. I told them they'd just missed a big frog, swimming round frantically, that we'd fished out with some difficulty. One little boy rushed to look at the water, the other looked blank, until his mother bent and rapidly flashed her fingers, when his face lit up, and he smiled.

"I'm sorry, I didn't realise he had a problem", I said. We chatted for a while; she told me they had all come from Fareham, because the Garden was such a safe place for them to run about as her son couldn't hear her call if he was out of sight. She could relax here. I said "It must be difficult for you both".

"We're fine" she smiled. "Can you think of anything better than to come to a garden like this, on a day like today, to have a picnic with your very best friend?"

We watched them running across the grass to the blue bench. It seemed that no England in Bloom judge could ever say anything as encouraging as that.

The lady in the wheelchair came to the Garden Party, along with 271 others - a record.

The Friends' new fountain Plaque was in place; everyone seemed very pleased with it. The sun shone, the tents looked trim and festive, and the Pimms flowed. The Raffle was wonderfully supported, and lots of guests bought plants.

Several Friends said afterwards they thought it was the best Garden Party ever, and we made £1500, another record. The Committee and the Garden Party team were exhausted but delighted!

Thoughtful, too; success brings problems of its own. The number of Friends has grown steadily, and the Garden Party has grown with it. Once, we debated whether to try to limit both, but decided that would be against all the Community spirit of the Garden. Not very sensible either, to appear exclusive, if you want everyone to wish it well. Limiting Party numbers on logistic grounds has been tried - a "First come, first served" principle is fair enough - but it's an uneasy compromise, we hate turning Friends away. As your Committee we feel we owe it to the Friends to explore ways of accommodating as many of them as possible.

We've already needed outside help with service. With the possibility next year of 300 ticket applications from a membership of 350 Friends (a modest percentage) we would certainly need more help with the food, for which responsibility has fallen increasingly heavily onto a small team.

Either we must ask if more Friends could contribute more small eats, on a carefully planned and integrated basis, or we should consider the possibilities of a professional

catering input. But how much input? We don't want to lose the generous involvement of the faithful Friends who have yearly brought such delicious contributions and by doing so have made it such a warm and neighbourly affair. Nor do we want such a huge jump in ticket prices that only a few can afford to come! Small eats are labour intensive and correspondingly expensive, as tentative enquiries have shown. And it is our major fund-raising event of the year.

We need to know how you feel about it. It would be a big help if you could return the cut-off strip - to me or any of the Committee, before Christmas cards take over! - and let us know. Then we can have some informed proposals for the AGM.

Dates for your new 2004 Diary -

The AGM: February 21st. The Plant Sale May 30th The Garden Party, ^{19th} 21st June.

The Pomegranates over the title are tangible reminders of the changing climate - there's an unprecedented crop of fruit on our Pomegranate tree, just as there was on our Mulberry (though there won't be Pomegranate conserve at the Coffee Morning!). Both flourished in the long hot Summer, like so many of the Mediterranean plants.

Time may reveal casualties from the long drought however: several Roses look dead. An article in a London paper describes how Park Directors are anticipating casualties and rethinking planting plans. At Hillier's Arboretum two Cedars have dried out and split. We too found the earth bone dry and impacted below 3', when we tried to plant the black-stemmed Bamboo. We filled the hole, but the water took days to drain away. Even deep roots must have been parched.

Incidentally, the Bamboo's non-invasive spread is about 6ft, height 12ft. Evergreen; light and pretty in Winter, it was introduced from China just before the Crescent was built in 1825; it moves and sounds most attractively in the wind.

We were sad to say goodbye to Dennis and Hilary Thain, who did so much for the Garden during their years here, and who have returned to Dennis' native Edinburgh. Hils especially has left a big gap; a briskly effective Committee member, she was a knowledgeable and experienced gardener who thoroughly enjoyed the work she did for the Friends. She made the Box hedge her special project - one year she clipped the entire 230m herself (with precision: she was a trained hairdresser). They promise to return for the Garden Party, so the Box had better look good! We wish them joy in their new home and hope the Green Team will be joined by others who find it as much fun as Hils did. A big welcome awaits!!

Meanwhile, Rita Rundle has very kindly offered her services to the Committee and we have been happy to see her at recent meetings.

We live in curious times: somebody went to a lot of trouble to steal our yellow NGS collection box, padlocked to the railings with a hefty chain: it contained about 20p. A Friend who's since died made it, so it was a sad as well as pointless theft.

Then Andy James came to the rescue, making a replacement a project for apprentice welders at HMS Sultan which should be smartly in place next Spring. We are very grateful indeed to the kind makers, as well as to Andy, who has been steadily working at painting all the benches in the Garden. Thank you!

Another sign of the times has been the late Summer evening socialising, loads of beer cans the morning after - but no damage to the Garden. Young people quietly enjoying a few beers are fine (though it'd be lovely if they used the bin!); drug dealing and usage are entirely different. But wintry nights should shelve the problems for a while.

The Spring Newsletter ended with a list of ambitions for the year:-

'A beautiful Community Garden. A great Garden Party. A Tool storage. A really good party for the Chernobyl children. The green and black Bamboo - and perhaps some Crescent Mulberry conserve?'

Thanks to the efforts, hard work, and generosity of so many Friends, we've achieved nearly all these things, with flying colours. We're still working on the tool stowage, and we hope soon to have a small Friends' Notice Board, to highlight points of special interest and to communicate with Friends and visitors.

It's heartwarming to see the pleasure and goodwill generated around a small community Garden, whose changing beauty through the years reflects all the care that the Friends put into it, making it the setting for so many happy times.

Wendy Osborne

P.S. Hope, the Wessex Medical Trust (Gosport and Lee) have asked us to let you know that on the evening of 21st November (same date as the Coffee Morning) they're having their inaugural Concert, at St Mary's Church, at 7pm.

A treat for music lovers: the Ladies' Viva Voce Choir, a varied programme with a commentary and serious and solo works appealing to a wide variety of tastes, tickets cost £5 including a glass of wine : ring 92 527662 or 02380 333366 (Trust office)

Please give this to any Committee member - or bring it with you to the Coffee Morning

The Garden Party, 2004.

In order to cater for the number of Friends that would like to attend, do you think:-

1...We should continue to ask Friends to contribute food, on a carefully planned and integrated basis?
YES/NO

2...We should employ professional caterers, raising ticket prices and reducing the funding benefit to do so?
YES/NO

3...If YES, should caterers should do ALL the food, or only PART of it, leaving the Friends a more manageable provision to deal with, and reducing the financial impact.

ALL/PART

Name and Address.....

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