



## *The Autumn Newsletter, 2006*

Dates for your diaries, this year and next:

**Coffee Morning** - Remember, remember, 1st of December! - Parish Centre - 10.45 am

**Annual General Meeting** - February 25th '07 - Parish Centre, 2-30 pm.

*A late Spring, a long hot Summer - and a wonderful Autumn...*

The months since the AGM have been unceasingly active and the serene beauty of Autumn colour in the Garden as I write is like a tranquil coda.

The Tulip trees turned gently to butter-yellow, then tawny apricot, deepening now in the younger one to a glowing Sienna. The ancient one, always two weeks ahead of its junior in the West wing, is now almost bared for the Winter, looking beautiful but more frail than I would like to see.

The butterfly-shaped leaves on the Gingko near the East central path are still green, but every leaf is lavishly bordered with gold. The Mulberry tree radiates from palest lemon to vibrant lime-green, changing almost hourly as the temperature drops.

Fatsia and Mahonia Japonica are bursting into flower, there's an extravagance of brilliant scarlet holly berries, and seedheads of Stinking Gladwyn Iris are splitting and twisting to spill seeds like dazzling orange pearls.

Fungi have been popping up everywhere, in all shapes, sizes and colours, but the enchantment of finding one red-spotted beauty is wiped out by the horror of discovering 4 clumps of the dreaded, destructive Honey Fungus.

Throughout all the ongoing activities of a glorious Summer, the work on the Garden continues. Christine, our trainee, works with me all day on Wednesdays and Fridays. Wednesday is Volunteers Day and there has regular input from several faithful regular volunteers, especially Pam

Dimmock, David Merrit, and David Palmer, who drives from Stubbington. After our freakishly late Spring, Bill Rundle returned from 6 months in Australia to find the Box hedge still uncut in July.

Very sensibly, Bill decided to try a battery-driven cutter, which makes the task much quicker. In less experienced hands this could have been risky, but Bill has been responsible for establishing the clean lines and solidity of our hedge for three years now and results were well up to his usual high standard.

*Although it's a one-off each year, it's a big task and one that should be undertaken by a small team rather than a solitary Rundle. Anyone with a steady hand and a good eye, who think they may be able to join in the care of this major feature of the Garden for a few hours each year, would be particularly welcome.*

The Friends' Calendar rolled on through increasingly lovely weather.

**The Plant Sale.** One of our best, thanks largely to Christine Oldham whose green fingers have produced so many plants, for us and for St Mark's Churchyard. Friends brought lots of really beautiful plants, and interested gardeners came from miles around - a lovely morning, all round.

**The Green Flag** Judges came in June. This year GBC made a joint Application, uniting the Garden with St Marks' Churchyard to make a strong bid for a Heritage Green Site Award. (This could only be won in addition to a Green Flag.)

For two years we had tried alone and not managed the double. This year, designs for a new Interpretation Board seemed to impress the Judges with their visual portrayal of the Garden's history - and they were captivated entirely by the sight of S. Mark's churchyard, in radiant flower. The combination, with the wealth of local history that had been so lovingly uncovered and preserved there, proved irresistible.

So a third Green Flag flies over the Garden, and we hope to see the other emblem of our united success - the Heritage plaque - in place soon at the gates of the Churchyard.

Together, thanks to their Friends, these two places offer a worthwhile and beautiful area for anyone interested in Gosport's **Anglesey Ville** - and judging from the increasing number of enthusiastic visitors, many people find it fascinating.

Judging over, the next excitement was the **Garden Party**, sited this year in the East wing of the Garden to leave the central area and the West wing freely accessible to any other visitors.

It was a great party! Kind Friends truly excelled themselves in the catering department and many gave generously for the Raffle and the Children's Lucky Dip. The sun shone all day: by the evening the air was still warm, perfumed with Roses and the clove scent of Pinks.

It was, thanks to the many people who made it so, a memorable community event; some said the best Garden Party ever. There were lots of children; indeed it has been a year of children in the Garden.

The party for the **Chernobyl Children** followed, under new management. Lesley Flett co-ordinated a team of fantastic helpers, who entertained and generally cherished their rather younger than usual guests from Belarus. There was a spectacular tea! Lots of photographs record the joyous pleasure of every one involved, hosts and children alike.

Maggie Cochran has asked me to thank the generous contributors towards the bags of Treasure, who made sure they were specially good this year, and the Friends were also very grateful indeed to Roger Robertson who organised a romping programme of games and amusement.

Still on the subject of Chernobyl, one of the Friends recently celebrated his 70th Birthday with a party. Instead of presents, he asked his guests to donate a small contribution to the Garden's Chernobyl Party fund. This produced the amazing sum of almost £300!!! He, and the Committee, were totally thrilled.

We live in stressful and frequently depressing times, but the way these community events in Crescent Garden have somehow taken on a momentum of their own, and the generosity and kindness of all the many people involved, is immensely heartening.

More children arrived, on two very hot days in July, having walked all the way from their **Leesland Infants' School** in parties of about 60.



The reason for their visit? They came to explore Crescent Garden and to window shop for their very own new garden-playground at school.

They were quite the best kind of garden visitors: tremendously enthusiastic, with the sense of wonder only young children have. Many parents came too, with a band of teachers who had evidently prepared their pupils to open their eyes and really **look**.

There were laminated cards with lines like "Find a Plant with leaves as long as your arm!" "Can you find plants with fruits and seeds?" - and "Which ones would you like to have in our new garden playground at School?"

Choices were not always practical - they loved the Magnolia Grandiflora, flowering magnificently just above their heads (the smaller ones queued to be lifted up to sniff its wonderful scent).

They were enchanted by the Smoke Bush, its flowers really truly like drifting smoke. Love-in-the-Mist seedheads like pepperpots, long crimson crimped tassels of Love-Lies-Bleeding, a real Mulberry tree to go round at high speed - and then to creep inside, into a leafy tent, black branches laden with ruby berries: everything was discovery and enchantment to them.

Watching and listening to them all, I found myself seeing the Garden through their eyes, and marvelling at it. Grown-ups take so much for granted!

We hope for more young schools to come, though it is a big responsibility for teachers with Risk Assessments to deal with. The parents were a great help to them, and were almost as excited about the Garden as the children, which was lovely.

During the Summer, about 14 **Wedding parties** came for photographs in the Garden, some walking up from the village, some driving from further away. One party came from a Reception at Lee on Solent's Community centre. About 7 or 8 had Champagne served from a table in the Central area.

For all of them, Friends' Volunteer gardeners made the Garden look its best, dead-heading and raking the gravel - (a small chore that, but it makes a surprising difference to the Garden's overall appearance and welcome.)

As you all know, the Council have been considering for the past year **Licensing conditions** for all the town's Open Spaces. (For the purpose of the Act, even those listed in the Gosport Plan as Historic Gardens come under that description).

We have shared a great deal of anxiety for a long time that commercial pressures would damage this very small and unique Garden, detracting from the community's free enjoyment of it, and so making the Friends voluntary contribution untenable.

We are grateful that GBC has involved your Committee in ongoing consultations, taking into account every aspect of a complex problem, including of course the Friends' community events.

The aim has been to achieve an easily understood and interpreted set of Conditions that will protect both the Garden and the wider interest of the community - besides enabling the Friends to continue their voluntary work for the community without prejudice.

The final draft is still in progress, but we are optimistic that you will feel reassured when we meet for the AGM in February.

By then the proposals will have been passed on to the Council's Legal Department for approval. We understand there will certainly be a clause to the effect that if proposed Conditions do not work well in practice, joint re-consideration will take place at the end of 2007.

Another important issue that has arisen this year is the nature of the partnership between GBC and the Friends.

It's now 15 years since its inception. It has never been formalised, and has been based purely on goodwill. Not a bad foundation - possibly the secret of its success - but times, priorities and circumstances inevitably change, over a 15 year period. What works well for one decade will almost certainly need constructive adjustment to serve the next. Exploring the Council's perception of the Garden and its likely future policy towards it, together with an assessment of the part played by the Friends, should make fresh appraisal and understanding of our partnership both constructive and re-invigorating.

We are pleased that a meeting with GBC's Leisure Services is being programmed shortly for this purpose, and again hope for a positive outcome to report to you all in February .



Again this year, many visitors came in response to that famous best-seller, the **National Gardens Scheme's Yellow Book**, which also advertises our Plant Sale.

Thanks to their ongoing contributions in the Yellow tin, and to the proceeds of our Plant Sale, Crescent Garden has been able to support the great contributions the NGS makes - to Cancer Research, Hospices, MacMillan Nurses and Carers' Charities - National Trust Gardeners' Training Scholarships - and the welfare of Gardeners' Orphans, among other good causes..

At the NGS County AGM, it is customary for an individual who has been helped through the Scheme to give a brief account of how it made a difference to them. One year it was an enthusiastic National Trust trainee, with bright career prospects ahead: another time a very moving account from a husband, how he was enabled to care for his Alzheimers-stricken wife to the very end of her life by the Carer's help he was given. She was 44; they had young children.

In the Yellow Book for 2007, there should be this new entry under **Alverstone Crescent Garden:-**

*Restored Regency Ornamental Garden, designed to enhance fine Crescent (Owen, 1826). Trees, Walks and flowers lovingly maintained by community/Council partnership. Garden's considerable local historic interest now highlighted by impressive restoration and creative planting of adjacent St. Mark's Churchyard.*

*Worth seeing together - Heritage, History and Horticulture: a fascinating package!*

There's also soon to be a new **Website**, featuring the Garden and the Churchyard as part of **Anglesey Ville**, through the untiring efforts of David Burgess. David has sifted through a mountain of information, photographs, drawings and maps, to make a readily accessible, well illustrated and fascinating picture of the enterprise and the neighbourhood it created.

There is even a portrait of the Marquis of Anglesey, its original Patron, mounted and wearing his splendid Cavalry uniform, painted in the 1840's, long after he lost his leg at Waterloo.

**The Garden's Trees.** The Barrell Tree Consultancy has reported on all the major trees, with particular reference to any that might be considered for a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). While he identified several candidates, the consultant thought TPO's were unnecessary since the trees are being sensitively managed by GBC and already have the protection of being in a Conservation Area.

Surprisingly our ancient Tulip Tree was not a candidate, on account of its great age which needs specialised - and probably expensive - management.

There is rot in some major branches, which it seems will make further reductions necessary. (The tree was reduced by 20% as a preservative measure about 13 years ago, by Jeremy Barrell). The work would be done in February. This beautiful tree, our emblem, is of the greatest importance to the Garden. Friends may feel that if there is any danger to its survival due to Council budgetary restrictions some of our funds might be offered to help towards its preservation. A question for the AGM, perhaps, when we will know more..

**Honey Fungus** has now shown itself to be the cause of death of the Hawthorn halfway down the East wing. Past experience suggests it is *Armillaria polymyces*, but even an expert sometimes needs lab. tests to be sure. It has appeared in other places too, on a nearby Bay, and worryingly in the vicinity of the old Tulip tree.

No point in worrying: there's nothing to be done except to keep trees and shrubs as free from stress as possible, and plant species known to be resistant to Honey Fungus, like Box. Fingers crossed!

Our Trainee Christine Gwynne, has been with us since last Winter, and has been invaluable. It's hard to see how we could have maintained the Garden this year without her persevering and reliable help. Another WRAGS trainee may be hard to find, but Christine loves the Garden and has indicated that she might be able to stay on for another year: another AGM topic, perhaps?

**Outings** - Two visits this year. An over-night one to Sissinghurst and Great Dixter, which won the highest praise from all who went, and a very happy day at Wilton House near Salisbury. The first was expertly planned by our Chairman, Don Cripps, who has organised so many excellent days



out for the Friends to enjoy, and the second was the work of Roy Anderson, who arranged our fabulous trip to France last year.

Finally, I must let you know that I have given notice to the Committee of my intention to retire as your Hon Secretary after the AGM, so the next Newsletter, sadly, will be my last.

Being Secretary, Social Secretary, gardener and your Curator together makes a really full-time job, and Julian has said very firmly that he wants his wife back!

I am so grateful to the other members of the Committee, who have done so much to lighten the load - the Social Secretaryship has been covered largely by the Friends who have run such wonderful Outings.

I am sure there is somebody among the Friends, far more computer-literate than I, who would make a great Secretary and produce illustrated Newsletters as good as those from Roy Harris for the Friends of S. Mark's Churchyard. (Yes, I've had a go at Roy, but no luck!)

**So: we need two new Committee Members: a Secretary - and also a Social Secretary or Co-ordinator of the groups arranging Friends' various events.**

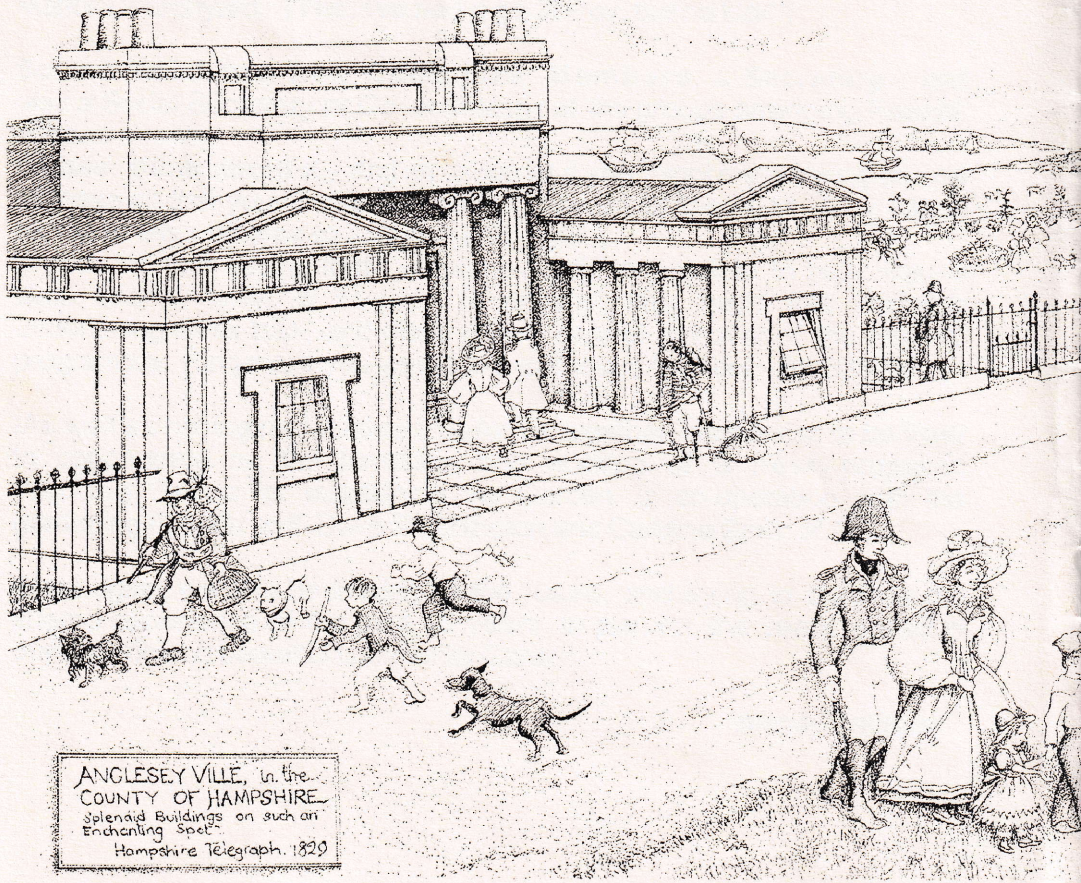
**Please think about it -** and let us know if you might enjoy taking on one of these so that your name can be put forward at the AGM. You would be extremely welcome to a very friendly group.

It goes without saying that I will do everything possible to help make it clear exactly what is involved to anyone who might just consider undertaking either task, and make a very careful turnover of the Friends' programme. Ring me, if you would like to know a bit more - 92-586403.

As well as having rather more time for us together, I hope also to be freer to concentrate on the formation and working of a newly-proposed **Working Group** for maintaining the Garden, in co-operation with the gardening Friends and Dave Stubbington and Caroline Smith of GBC.

Here again, we will be looking to the future, and trying to build on the shared experience of the past 15 years, to plan for the years ahead in our historic and beautiful community Garden.

Wendy Osborne



ANGLESEY VILLE, in the  
COUNTY OF HAMPSHIRE.  
"Splendid Buildings on such an  
"Enchanting Spot".  
Hampshire Telegraph. 1830