



FRIENDS OF CRESCENT GARDEN

THE FRIENDS' AUTUMN NEWSLETTER, 2007

Committee news

We very much regret that **Jill Streatfeild – James**, who has been unwell, has reluctantly resigned from the Committee. Jill is a founder member of the Friends' Committee; her quiet wisdom, hard work and kindly manner will be greatly missed at our meetings.

We send her all our best wishes for a speedy and complete recovery.

Coffee Morning – Friday the 23rd of November – Parish Centre-1045 – 1230.

Without Jill, (tower of strength on the Bric-a-brac pricing, display and selling) we urgently need another helper. It's an enjoyable profitable feature of the Coffee Morning and we'd like it to continue.

The Antiques Road Show it ain't – but its fun! If you could lend a hand it could make all the difference.

Ring David Merritt on 92- 582068.

A Flier will be issued closer to the event giving details on where you can forward your cakes, chutneys, bric-a-brac, books, bottles and raffle prizes. May I thank you in advance for your support and generosity?

The Garden in 2007

A hot April fears of great heat and water rationing – then overwhelming floods, and a wet chilly Summer – the only certainty about climate change is that it's alarmingly unpredictable.

The Mulberry tree hated heat in April, and dropped most of its crop in May. The rest was mostly beaten off by gales and heavy rain in July. Dahlias, on the other hand, loved the early warmth, shooting up before snails and slugs caught them and flowering extravagantly for months, without a hose in sight.

Green Flag Judging came earlier. Luckily it was fine, and they seemed pleased with what they saw. They spent quite some time pottering happily around St Mark's Churchyard, obviously enjoying the infinite variety of the planting, which was looking beautiful.

They questioned Caroline Smith, Gosport's Parks and Garden's Officer, on future maintenance plans and the ongoing partnership with the Friends, – both were obviously important in their assessment of whether Crescent Garden and St. Mark's Churchyard merited Green Flag and Green Heritage Site Awards for another year.

Good news! – The Mayor, Cllr. Keith Gill, kindly hoisted the new Flag for 2007/8 in September.

We now await the Judges' comments and recommendations for next year's objectives.

Autumn assessment. Gardening always entails forward planning. In Crescent Garden we may look carefully back to the 1830's, but next year - *five years ahead* – needs serious thought.

Photographs taken from early Spring onwards show how radically the Garden changes as weeks go by. Comparison with pictures from previous years highlights trends often missed when seeing it every day.

Over the years, as trees and shrubs grow, the scale of the Garden alters. Some, like the Bay trees, need regular reduction, to be programmed as part of the maintenance plan, but most others are simply fulfilling their potential, properly taken into account at planting time. Our two tall Cypresses are 4 or 5 times higher now than when they were planted in 1993, changing the whole perception of the central area.

Making the Garden less labour-intensive is always a priority.

The new edging round the centre beds is a wonderful example – no more edge cutting! Less couch – grass invading the beds, and the strong but almost invisible metal barrier preserves the flowing curves of the design. There is a very strong case for extending Everedge along the shrubbery beds, bit by bit, saving literally days of work every year. We are extremely grateful to those volunteers who painstakingly installed it for us.

Our Roses are an ongoing concern. For the first 4 years or so, they grew and flourished wonderfully. For the last 4 years, they have been in decline. Some, like the *Stanwell's Perpetuals* alongside the railings, and 3 *Blush Noisettes*, are doing well, but others have become tired and died back – or simply died. We've tried replacements, replacing soil to avoid Rose replant sickness – with little success. Being 'green' means we rely on ladybirds rather

than chemicals; we used to spray regularly. Perhaps a natural balance will be restored in time.

In one bed, behind the west central bench, we had 3 'Roses du Ro', supplied about 10 years ago by Peter Beale. Catalogued as strongly perfumed red flowers, a compact 3ft in height. Lovely red scented flowers, yes, but they shot to over 7ft of coarse, untidy suckering growth, crowding out nearly every other plant in the bed. Careful pruning and feeding was useless; they appear to have been wrongly supplied.

After a mammoth struggle we have dug them out, and the bed is being replanned and planted.

The big question is whether to persevere with the effort to keep old Roses at the heart of our planting scheme. Consultation with RHS and professionals has suggested it may be worth another try, as there is now a new product which, used at time of planting, can overcome the tendency for new roses to fail where others have been planted before. 'Rootgrow' is completely natural, containing spores of 5 species of beneficial fungi which promotes vigorous and speedy extra root growth. This helps newly planted roses to resist harmful organisms in the soil.

Hopefully three new Roses – of the right height! – will prosper with this treatment, plus some fresh topsoil, a good deal of organic matter, and careful feeding.

If successful, it may be that some of other flagging Roses could be replaced in the same way. If not, the central role of roses in Crescent Garden may have to be reconsidered.

But Roses are like dames: *There is nothing to propose, That is anything like a rose...* we'll do all we can to keep as many as possible in Crescent Garden.

Alternatives?

Where taller Roses have died, possibly from Honey fungus, we have achieved similar height and scale with other plants, like the 'Kangaroo Apple', (*Solanum laciniata*, from the Chelsea Physic Garden). Its inky purple flowers combined with Fennel and the wonderfully dark red "New Zealand Spinach", banked with bronze-leaved scarlet Dahlias have been particularly effective in late Summer and early Autumn. (Many of you bought plants of this at our Plant Sale. Bad frosts kill, but it grows fast from seed.)

The lovely Pinks (*Dianthus Rose de Mai*) that perfume the wavy-edged bed by the railings are to be renewed and replenished,

thanks to a generous donation from the family of Malcolm Compston. We understand that he found peace and comfort in the scents and the sound of the pattering water in the Garden during his last illness. His family's very kind gesture in his memory will give pleasure to many; Friends' will be even more pleased that their Garden was a help at such a time.

The original Old Pinks were sourced from Southview Nursery, which holds a National Collection. The bed will be cleared back during the Winter months, and some of the older large Cistus removed: the new edging will protect the new planting which will be finished in Spring '08.

Remember the Pomegranates? For 8 years a small Pomegranate tree bore scarlet flowers, near the path. It actually bore fruit, (though never as big as the ones sometimes seen in Waitrose.) Sadly, an unseen split in its forked trunk led to disease and we lost it. We are delighted that another one is being given by her family and friends in memory of Mrs Goss, a close neighbour of Crescent Garden and one of its earliest Friends. Thank you!

A Celebration. Notified of a Wedding photography session one Saturday; the fountain was checked and the gravel swept. When the guests assembled for the pictures, something looked very different. The central couple were both ladies, and the Best Man was a lady, too, in an elegant black dress. The pair looked serenely happy, and their friends full of joy. It was a first for the Garden, a moment of history and change, and we wished them every happiness.

Climate change? One late September morning a volunteer was confronted with a festoon of racy black underwear, draped like very exotic bindweed along the Garden railings. Uncertain which Department to contact – Health and Safety? – Street Scene? Leisure Services? She contacted Toby Streatfeild-James. Toby coolly took it all to a poker-faced Policeman, who presumably logged it in. It must be jazzing up the umbrellas in Lost Property no end.

We owe thanks to Council Parks and Leisure Service Officers: Samantha Voller, Caroline Smith and Dave Stubbington, for all their help and encouragement this year. And to the Council's own green team, Darren, Taffy and Pam, who have done a great job

with the grass-cutting, and take away all our great piles of brash. We couldn't manage without them.

More appreciation and thanks are due to the Friends' volunteer gardeners, who together with trainee gardener Christine Gwynne, have made Crescent Garden look cherished and welcoming all year.

Wednesday is the great day for team effort: if anyone feels like joining us, even if it's just for an hour, Wednesday is the day and we'd love to see you. Christine and I work on Fridays too, and welcome help, but it's satisfying, being part of a team of 6 or 7; so much is achieved and there's a coffee party halfway through. There's no commitment; an occasional Wednesday will fit in with other people's occasional Wednesdays very well. If it's raining, try next week!

And thanks to you, too – to all the Friends, whose support and pride in Crescent Garden has made it what it is.

The Picture of Angleseyville

Has not been forgotten: apologies for the long delays and technical hitches – but we'll get there!

Wendy Osborne, Friends' Curator

Friends Events during 2007

23rd May - Visit to Wakehurst Place

One Friend described Wakehurst as 'Magic!' Managed by the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew and with over 100 acres to enjoy. Features include nature reserves, ornamental Gardens and water features around an Elizabethan mansion, and the Millennium Seed Bank, an exciting global conservation project. There are famous collections from the Southern hemisphere and Asia – ever seen a Coffee tree? You could have seen one there! Beautiful woodlands housing national collections. A number of different walks to suit those that preferred a meander over gentle slopes as well as those able to enjoy a greater challenge. In a rather secluded area there was a memorial to those lost in the Korean War, not mentioned in any of the many leaflets available - but Wakehurst Place is very large. The Restaurant catered for all tastes. It was a thoroughly enjoyable day out for all 49 Friends.

Many thanks to Pam and John Dimmock whose organisation was spot-on and greatly appreciated.

28th May - Plant Sale

Despite atrocious weather conditions, the sale of plants given by Friends' too numerous to name, was a great success. Not only financially, but also a fitting reward for all those who supported the event. Special thanks go to Guy Sitwell in putting up the sheltering tent, and to those manning the stalls, and for those brave enough not to be put off by the elements to purchase our goodies. Thank you – may all your plants flourish!

16th June – The Garden Party

Bad forecast - fortunately it was fine for the Party. The whole event was contained within the East wing, with some modifications to the tentage layout. About 250 guests including numerous children, and feedback indicated all ages had a good time.

All comments are taken to heart by the organisers; it is perhaps worth mentioning that over 30 people are involved in one way or another in helping to organise the garden Party. Providing food or services, erecting tents and seating, rigging the audio system, running the Raffle, and selling the tickets, selling and collecting Admission tickets, and advertising the event – it's all a real community effort; and **Very** well done to all concerned. (Hope you're on for next year! Third Saturday in June...)

27th June - Chernobyl Party

Many thanks to Lesley Flett for organising another successful party. Days of wet weather caused some concern and led to Maggie Cochran and David Wardle hastily organising a contingency indoor venue (luckily not needed). Guy Sitwell, helped by four builders working nearby, put up the marquee on the day while others organised food and drinks. All was ready, and the sun almost shining, when the 12 children and their teacher/interpreter arrived at 2.30. Paul Hattin took individual and group photos of the children against a floral background then rushed off to get them developed. Lesley and Aileen led a fun session of traditional party games – put the tail on the donkey, an egg and spoon race (only with potatoes rather than eggs!) a Three-legged race, skipping race (demonstrated energetically by Lesley) - and a very

complicated team game that involved the children putting on a variety of hats and scarves. These were heartily enjoyed by all, with a lot of animated children yelling encouragement to their team. The children then entertained us with singing and dancing. A 12 year old boy played a moving rendition of 'Yesterday' on an electronic keyboard. Then it was time for tea, a wonderful spread from generous helpers.

Next came the treasure hunt organised by Maggie and her daughter Helena. The children followed a trail of coloured wool snippets to the compost heap where they found party bags with their names on. These were eagerly retrieved and the contents examined with glee.

Back in the marquee, there was a most scrumptious chocolate cake made by Felicity Anderson who had inscribed it in Russian with the words: 'Dear Friends, we love you - be happy'. With beaming faces the children thank us all. Paul meanwhile had returned photos and put them into frames. They were delighted, and left the party clutching these and their other treasures with big smiles. We had all had a memorable afternoon. As we were clearing up, the threatened rain finally arrived – too late to spoil the fun.

Thank you to everyone who helped to make it such a special afternoon. (Especially the children!)

Maggie Cochran, Friends' Membership Secretary

12th September - Visit to Hinton Ampner and Bramdean House

Arrived at Bramdean House to receive a warm welcome, coffee and an introduction to its history, as well as its lovely flower, fruit and vegetable gardens by the Head Gardener. A delightful and peaceful place much enjoyed by the Friends. Nearby is the Church of St Simon and St Judes built in the 12th Century which was well worth a visit.

The Hinton Arms was a good choice for lunch. Next stop, Hinton Ampner, a 20th century vision of Georgian living. Hinton Ampner the home of Ralph Dutton, the eighth and last Lord Sherborne. The house is a showcase for his collection of fine and decorative arts, with a particular interest in Italian painting and varieties of decorative hardstones. The wonderful gardens were filled with much to admire and the scenery quite breath-taking.

Congratulations to Roy and Joan Anderson on yet another well planned and much enjoyed outing.

Future Visit to France, 2008

Enquires are currently being made by Pam Dimmock, Lucketts have been approached and for a party of 30 have quoted £183 pp. This includes coach, Eurostar to Calais, 2 nights half board in 3* accommodation in Calais. For a party of 40 this cost reduces to £163 pp. A visit to Le Jardin d' Evea some 40 miles from Calais, is being looked at plus a further visit. The visit may take place in May 2008. Details to be confirmed in due course. Please let us know if you like the idea, a number of Friends' already have done so.

The Fountain

We have traced the supplier, and priced a replacement for the missing top bowl (pictured on the cover). However, your Committee feels they cannot at present justify the considerable expenditure at the risk of presenting a renewed challenge to vandals. A subject for your views at the AGM?

Lost Property

Pam Dimmock has an item of child's clothing, left over from the Garden Party. It is a donkey brown zip up ribbed cardigan (label – Boyz unlimited 9-10 years), stitched logo on sleeve URBAN 27. Pam can be contacted on 92-526761.

Your views and suggestions on both Garden and Friends' activities are always welcome, though our Chairman, Don Cripps is the only one so far you can E-mail – the rest of us hope to catch up shortly.

The Treasurer has noted that a number of subscriptions are still outstanding. If you are in any doubt as to whether you have paid yours, please check with Gill Comrie on 02392-588316 thank you.

Annual General Meeting

Saturday 1st March 2008 – Parish Centre, 2-30.
Hope to see you there.

David Merritt
Friends' Hon Secretary

