



## **THE FRIENDS' AUTUMN NEWSLETTER, 2008**

### **Coffee Morning – Friday the 5<sup>th</sup> of December – Parish Centre-1030 – 1215.**

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

### **From your Curator**

*(The photograph on the cover was taken by Julian several years ago. Please, if you have a great picture of the Garden, photograph or painting, that you think would make a good cover, do show it to us!)*

A small maple (*Acer palmatum*, introduced 1820) is shortly to be planted just west of the central gravel. A generous gift, in memory of a much loved nephew, it will balance the Wintersweet (*Chimonanthus praecox*, 1766) on the east side that flowers with such fragrance in Winter. While retaining the roses that are doing well, with the help of GBC's Dave Stubbington we are introducing these small trees instead in the central beds to give seasonal interest and colour when roses are out of season.

The new Pinks are flourishing, and the Friends' Volunteers have won another Green Flag for Gosport Borough Council, although it isn't flying yet. We hope to have the Judges' comments soon which help us to plan the coming year, besides encouraging the volunteers who work so hard and cheerfully.

A grudging Summer - and the seasons come and go so fast! But Autumn in the Garden is a time to be savoured and enjoyed. Golden and flaming leaves, the mornings' pearly grass and spiders' webs; a medley of sudden toadstools; and the late, late flowers, braving the growing chill at night. Some evenings the season's brilliant colours seem to reverberate in the glory of our Solent sunsets.

Everything is heightened by the feeling that it won't last long. Sweeping up the leaves as they fall, and packing them into the

compost bays is like putting away Summer clothes. It's the time to think and plan, and to plant bulbs for new life and colour in the Spring, far beyond Christmas.

Autumn eventually comes to gardeners, as well as gardens, though rather more slowly. Kneeling down is still fine; getting up needs concentration. The spade gets heavier - have you noticed this? - and how every task takes longer? Work too long, and your back takes a mean revenge.

Unbelievably, in August 2009 it will be twenty years since the Garden's railings were restored and the whole project of Crescent Garden and its Friends began to take shape. Since 1991 when the Friends began, what they have achieved for their community has been extraordinary.

Just think for a moment -

There's the Fountain, the bronze plaque, 16 Garden Parties, 16 Coffee Mornings - 8 parties for Chernobyl Children - 60 Seasonal Meetings - 15 AGM's - around 20 lovely Friends' Outings - 5 Green Flag Awards - 3 Heritage Site Awards (shared with S. Mark's Churchyard) - numerous Britain in Bloom awards - over a dozen illustrated talks to local interested groups - (and about 25 Newsletters! For 11 years we've featured in the National Gardens Scheme's famous Yellow Book, which has collected nationwide recognition for Crescent Garden (as well as nearly £400 p.a. for charities close to all our hearts, listed by David below.)

We've moved a surprisingly large Tulip tree to a place of safety, planted over 12 trees, put in thousands of bulbs and plants, sold cards, cakes, well over a 100 prints, table mats, quantities of bric-a-brac and jars of home-grown Mulberry jelly.

Essentially, all this time the Friends have established and sustained the longest constructive partnership with our Local Authority that one long-serving Councillor can remember. As a fair-sized group (over 360 strong) we are totally non-political, while working cheerfully with whichever colour elected Council happens to be in the majority at the time. With their help, we serve the community and enjoy the Garden at the heart of all this endeavour.

**Because of the Friends, it's established as part of a historic urban landscape plan - and very dear to many for what a plot this size can offer - beauty, safety, tranquillity, historic interest - and friendliness, in every sense of the word.**

**Why all this looking back?** Because in August 2009 I will be 75, and I am learning that growing old gracefully is not a passive business. Besides Ibuprofen and a philosophical outlook, it needs planning and common sense.

Last August, I notified your Committee that in a year's time I would like to sort of retire. Sort of ? Well, I love the Wednesday mornings with the team of faithful volunteers and a mug of Julian's coffee halfway through!

Gosport Council have indicated that their budgets won't run to subsidising a Friends' trainee after Christine finishes in March '09, so there will not be another for me to train. The present Volunteers are now experienced, but will need all the help any Friends can give - so I will join them on Wednesday mornings as they continue to increase in number. My second working day - Fridays, with Christine - will phase out gently after March. I shall never retire as a Friend, and it goes without saying that I will always be available on a consultancy basis whenever wanted.

I feel like a worried Mum as her baby grows up but I remind myself that - through the united efforts of good people so numerous there isn't space to name them all - the Friends and the Garden **have** grown up. Together we've come a long way from the infant project of nearly 18 years ago. Thanks to every one of them, we have a great track record, healthy finances, seventeen years' experience of a unique partnership with our Local Authority - and a nationally known Garden for Gosport to be proud of.

Looking back sometimes reminds us what we are capable of, and gives us confidence to look forward.

Like all community groups, we need to take stock, review our strengths, and encourage new blood and new ideas, on how to maintain and strengthen what we have created between us by doing things we enjoy.

Adapting intelligently is necessary for survival - but the real secret of the Friends' success, and what makes them so special, is the energy of their goodwill. With that, a community can achieve almost anything.

**I have a dream Friends' Visit!** Three nights in Paris, at a B&B hotel: Day 1, a visit to **La Roseraie de Bagatelle**, truly a paradise of roses. Day 2 - To buy vegetables from the Potager du Roi at **Versailles** (besides a look at the grandest garden of them all...) Anyone can dream...Tell us yours!

## Observations on the gardens we saw in France

*Our last French visit was to large and famous gardens, notably Monet's Giverny, the formidable Princesse Sturza's Le Vasterival, and the Gertrude Jekyll-designed garden at Les Bois de Moutiers, a Lutyens house. This trip, we were to explore two much smaller and less well-known gardens. **Les Jardins d'Evea*** The late Spring meant we saw it before its full glory, but this meant we were not distracted from the extraordinary range and ambition of this father and son partnership.

A large flat field site, behind their modest house on the roadside, is sheltered by high stands of distant mature trees; a broadly curving wide stream flows through it. Paths led us through an amazing series of surprises: a growing maze of a native Willow; a dark pyramid of Yew enclosed in clipped square walls; riotous borders with strange collections of unexpected curiosities.

A twirly old brass bedstead was enthusiastically embraced by an extravagant Clematis, ancient perambulators were entwined and spilling flowers: antique farm implements - some alarmingly lethal - were ingeniously incorporated into planting schemes. Oddly, it felt right they should be there, pensioned off after years of shaping the landscape.

A succession of rooms, framed by a wide variety of hedging - living woven Willow, Yew, Escallonia, clipped Leyland Cypress, Bay - and everywhere was about to be inundated with Roses of every sort, mostly climbers, rearing over arches to frame yet another discovery. Beside the sunlit stream, green with flags and rushes, alive with the quacking of exotic ducks, was a table and chairs - waiting for the Mad Hatter's Tea Party? Romantic little hidden alcoves with love-seats were placed at thoughtful intervals. It was clearly an acidic soil: a young collection of burnished Maples flourished wonderfully beyond a really ravishing wild-flower meadow. All kinds of creatures: goats, geese and ornamental fowl, and something in a shed which couldn't be coaxed out, but could well have been a unicorn. A lot of noisy frogs, dragon-flies and butterflies, and a hospitable spread of tables in the shade for coffee - or an indulgent ice-cream. We were astonished by the photographs of the garden's progress over a mere seven years.

This was a creation hard to define, but it has invention, wit and exuberance, and is somehow very French! Highly enjoyable on a beautiful day; we bought two maniacal looking birds made of twisted rusty iron, to stick in pots flanking our back door - they make me smile, remembering the Jardins d'Evea.

**Le Chateau de Crimini** is very small as chateaux go, hidden in woods, well below the straight road travelling north - we missed the turning, and had to go back. Down and down, through a high avenue of trees and there, at the bottom, a double moat placidly reflected a small fortified mediaeval french castle, with a turret made for Rapunzle. It was enchanting.

The urbane gentleman who welcomed us courteously in English was the Chatelain, and our guide. He led us round the outer moat, where 2 black swans admired themselves in the green water - and, amazing! - the arrow slits and fortifications of ancient grey stone gave way to mellow brick, elegant Georgian-style tall windows and Dutch gabling. It was as if half a walnut shell was lined with lace. "War - and peace" our host explained. "For centuries life was short and bloody; then peace came and they built to enjoy, not defend against attack."

Most attackers appeared to have been English. We felt vaguely apologetic, but there were evidently no hard feelings.

"This is why we are tucked away down here, hard to find. They could hear the English marching, up on the road, and they kept very quiet". It was a very quiet place. He led us into the nearby mediaeval garden, through a wealth of ancient roses that I looked at with naked envy. Roses of Tuscany and Provence, of illuminated manuscripts and heavenly scents! Vegetables and herbs grew in immaculate raised wicker beds. The herbs were alive with bees - Rosemary, Lavender, Borage, Mint, Fennel, Hyssop, Rue - apothecaries' herbs and simples, Foxgloves for digitalis; herbs for healing and sleep.

"Sometimes some of these plants were used to quietly get rid of inconvenient or troublesome persons. There were many trials for poisoning in those days, it was quite common" said our host airily, leading us through an arch to the sunlit orchard beyond. It was a little chilling, looking back at the blue-black Monkshood, to think of shrouded figures gathering ingredients, intent on death.

We assembled on the long drawbridge, following our guide over the moats into the gatehouse. Bolting the great door, he raised a lever so that the drawbridge reared up, sealing us in, safe from any ghosts of marauding English soldiers prowling outside. The inner house of glowing rosy brick looked so beautiful we longed to see inside. But there was a Visitor Centre, an elegant barn conversion, where we sat at long tables to sample a strange honeyed herbal wine. There were books for sale; I regret now

that I didn't buy one with lovely photographs of the Chateau de Crimini. But it was memorable: a step into the Middle Ages.

Wendy Osborne, Friends' Curator

Picture of the Friends on the drawbridge of Chateau de Criminiil



## **Friends Events during 2008**

**7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> May** - Visit to France – A personal view of the event.

Details of the Gardens have already been covered by Wendy Osborne in her Curators Report.

Day 1 - Journey to Folkestone and via the Eurotunnel (surprising warm underground) to Calais, where lunch was taken, and an hour later arrived in Boulogne-sur-Mer. The weather was fine and it remained this way throughout our visit. Our hotel the Ibis Boulogne was quite close to the entrance of the harbour, which is home to one of France's largest fishing fleets. The hotel was comfortable, food and service was good and the staff very helpful (they posted my cards home after I had left).

La Basilique Notre-Dame is a very imposing building dominating the skyline and is shown in most of the postcards and advertising literature, unfortunately it is not open to the public and looked derelict. Still a steep walk taking me there had its moments, as I came across some charming shops, restaurants and yes tourist areas.

Day 2 – In the morning we travelled through pleasant countryside to Les Jardins d'eva. The pond which Wendy mentioned, attracted a lot of attention. I noticed Felicity Anderson sketching the scene. In the afternoon we arrived at Montreuil an old but interesting small town for lunch and a wander around. No one had told us that France was to celebrate the 63<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of VE day on the day that we visited. Montreuil was literally closed down. What restaurants were opened were mostly booked up by locals. However by careful exploration we found something to eat. Field Marshall Earl passed by/through Montreuil, hence the most imposing statue of him on a magnificent horse.

As we had some time on our hands a vote agreed we should take a look at the nearest attraction 'La Touquet' famous for amongst other things, horse racing. There did not appear to be any racing going on however it was obvious a great many people were heading in the same direction as ourselves. Eventually we arrived at the seafront and very impressive it was. The local attractions seemed to be doing a roaring trade. Strangely the local toilets



were closed. There was nothing for it but to enter the nearest bar in order to use their facilities and a drink or two.

Back at the Hotel in Boulogne we enjoyed our last evening together before some decided to venture out to see a little of the nightlife. The Irish Pub 'Gordon' in Rue du Bras D'or was recommended for its guinness, strange that. It was closed.

Finally deep into the old Port area I located the Hotel de la Matelot, I am not making this up, it is next to the Le Select Pub in Boulevard Saint Beuve. Recommend them.

Day 3 – Journey home, but first a visit to the splendid 'Jardin Medieval du chateau de Creminil'. Received a very warm welcome.

On the coach again and heading for home but not before spending a couple of hours in Calais huge Hypermarket the Cite Europe, elevators take you between levels. After some retail therapy, in my case, I purchased some quality wine, it was time to dine. Strange that of all the eating places I could have chosen in the Hypermarket, the one I selected contained only one person I recognised, Jill White, the same lady I had sat next to on the coach. You couldn't have made it up as Richard Littlejohn (Daily Mail) would have said.

The visit worked like clockwork, we were on time for each visit and event thanks to the very pleasant and capable driver, Lucketts luxury coach and Pam and John Dimmock whose organisation was spot-on and greatly appreciated. Many thanks also to Enid Billington who without being asked, took it upon herself to take charge of the beverage facilities laid on by Lucketts in the coach. Enid was a natural stewardess and kept us all smiling and supplied with refreshing drinks throughout the journey out and on our return journey home. A successful raffle on the return journey just about paid for the prizes, and yes John Dimmock won the bottle of whisky, again!!

Another very successful visit.

The usual September visit never occurred, because we could not find someone to organise a visit. Better news for 2009, a visit is in the early stages of planning, a number of sites are being

considered and the one chosen will be announced at the next AGM (Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2009 in the Parish Centre 2-30 – 5pm). The Friends' attending the AGM will be invited to choose whether they would prefer a day visit or a longer period so more places of interest could be enjoyed.

### **26<sup>th</sup> May** - Plant Sale

The weather this year was even worse than last year, which was atrocious, it was so bad we could not consider putting up our little tent for some form of protection. Good job we had a nearby tree to provide some relief from the rain but not the gale force wind. We did not expect many people to venture out and not many did.

Despite the conditions a very good selection of plants were donated and on a better day we might possibly have generated more money than last year. Friends' manning the sale never fail to amaze, they turned out as promised and made the best of the conditions, talk about the Dunkirk spirit.

Some sales were made and as usual quite a number were to, you guessed it, by those manning the sale. The unsold plants were laid out close to the yellow collection box near the disabled entrance, and over the next few days quite a number of the plants were bought. So although takings were down a tidy sum was raised. You may not be aware that money raised from the Plant Sale is sent to the 'The National Gardens Scheme' who support:

Macmillan Cancer Support, Marie Curie Cancer Care  
Help the Hospices, Crossroads – Caring for Carers  
The Queen's Nursing Institute, The Royal Gardener's Orphan Fund

NGS gardeners' careerships of the National Trust  
Perennial – Gardeners' Royal Benevolent Society  
County Nursing Associations  
Local charities nominated by owners, about 1000 in total

So the Friends' donation really does go to very worthy causes.

Many thanks to those who provided the plants 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!

### **16<sup>th</sup> June – The Friends' Garden Party**

263 adults, 27 children (7-15) and 12 children under 7 plus 6 officials guests – total 308 attended this year, could have been more if all guests invited were able to attend. Sales of tickets up from last year and some 32 additional adults attended.

This put a strain on our resources, staff and volunteers. In future it has been decided to stick to our rules more closely in that only two guests per household are permitted not two guests per member of the Friends'.

The popularity of the Garden Party remains important to the Friends' and long may it do so.

To repeat what was explained in last years Newsletter: Over 30 people are involved in one way or another in helping to organise the garden Party. Providing food, Pimms or services, erecting tents and seating, rigging the audio system, running the Raffle, and selling the tickets, selling and collecting Admission tickets, and outstanding subscriptions and advertising the event. Sadly most of the volunteers are, shall we say, getting on a bit, like the person writing this article, we do it in the main, because we enjoy it, most of the time. However when we ask for volunteers it is because we genuinely could do with a bit of help.

Whilst on the subject of volunteers, again a most marvellous effort by all of them once again, and by the paid staff who delivered the food and Pimms both of which were of a remarkably high standard.

We have a problem that can be resolved by two volunteers to share the load with making the Pimms. For some years we have survived with only two people making the Pimms, this is a demanding and important task, but it also means the Pimms makers do not have a chance to join their friends and enjoy whatever is going on. Please let the Secretary know if you are prepared to help out next year, we do need 2 teams of 2 people to take turns in providing the Pimms. Instructions can be provided. From comments received the Party went down well, thank you all for making it so.

Thanks also to Bob Bone, son David and Paul Hattin for the new PA System which worked very well and made life a little easier for our Chairman Don Cripps, to Pam Dimmock and team who were rushed off their feet selling a record number of raffle tickets, to Jill Parry in charge of food and all her food providers, to Lesley Flett for storing the food and with others did the washing up, to Jane Harris for providing the strawberries and cream, to Gill Comrie for selling the tickets and other chores, to Guy Sitwell and his volunteers who started putting up the tentage from 12am and finished taking them down again and cleaning up long after guests arrived home, thanks to Maggie Cochrane for providing the children's Lucky Dip, thanks to the Gatemens/Greeters, thanks to Wendy Osborne, David Wardle and Rita Rundle for providing organisation advice. Finally to Pam and her husband Roger Mawby who for the first time provided a record amount of Pimms (had to go for extra ingredients during the Party), so good was the Pimms that some were trying to obtain more after the Bar was closed.

### 16<sup>th</sup> June - Chernobyl Party

Many thanks to Lesley Flett for organising another successful party for the twelve children from Belarus.

Lesley had additional help this year, John and Kate Barnard who live in Crescent Road but spend most of their time in London, made themselves available to help entertain the children, and what a good job they both did. Do hope they are available again next year.

After the usual children's games, it was the children's turn to entertain the hosts by singing a Birthday song, followed by Smile, the Birdy song (clapping hands, flapping arms and wiggling up and down) accompanied by a young boy playing the harmonica.

Felicity Anderson provided her usual wonderful chocolate cake.

The children enjoyed their tea party and treasure hunt.

The children's were accompanied by Brycoula Ammonvives a teacher, who thanked the Friends' for their kindness, and then for some reason presented a lapel badge to the Friends' Secretary, maybe it was because I was the oldest one there?

**Your views and suggestions** on both Garden and Friends' activities are always welcome, either through our Chairman Don Cripps whose E-mail address is: – [bandcripps@btinternet.com](mailto:bandcripps@btinternet.com), or any of the committee members.

The Friends' Membership Secretary Maggie Cochrane, has noted that a number of subscriptions (more than 40 at the last count) 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.

There will also be an opportunity to pay outstanding subscriptions at the Coffee Morning on 5<sup>th</sup> December. The Friends' Treasurer David Wardle, who will be taking your entrance fee of £1 (which pays for the hire of the Parish Centre and overheads), will accept outstanding subscriptions on the day. Other days to Gill Comrie.

For those who no longer want to be a Member of the Friends of Crescent Garden or can not for one reason or another, would they please inform Gill Comrie, so that our records could be updated, thank you.

### **Annual General Meeting**

Saturday 28th February 2009 – Parish Centre, 2-30 – 5pm.  
Hope to see you there.

David Merritt  
Friends' Hon Secretary

Tel. 02392 582068

