



FRIENDS OF CRESCENT GARDEN

FRIENDS EVENTS THIS SUMMER

The Friends Garden Party: Saturday 21st June 2008 from 6-8pm

Tickets will be available for sale from Thursday 15th May until Saturday 14th June

Prices: £8 Adults, £3.50 for under 15's, £1 for under 7's, babies free. The increase of 50p for adults and under 15's is the first for some years and will help to pay the increases in payments for staff and other overheads.

Tickets can be obtained only from Gill Comrie (same as last year) her address and telephone details are:

10 Anglesey Arms Road
Alverstoke
Gosport
Hants PO12 2DG
Tel. No 02392 – 588316

Please make cheques out to 'Friends of Crescent Garden'.
Gill will add children's names to Adult/Members ticket.

Please ring Gill to arrange collection of tickets, leave a message on her answer phone, if she is out, with a landline telephone number (no mobile numbers please – to reduce costs) and Gill will get back to you. Alternatively order by mail with stamped address envelope (not smaller than 220mm x 110mm which is ideal).

Gill will accept any outstanding subscriptions but only in cash please. Last year some members added subscriptions to the ticket cheque which caused additional work to sort out. To avoid disappointment please obtain your tickets as soon as possible
Thank you for your co-operation. Hope you enjoy this Newsletter

Monday 26th May Bank Holiday Plant Sale. 10am – Noon

Bring and buy, if you can – Bargains galore! Help needed to sell plants, please ring David Merritt on 02392-582068 if you are available. If you could let Rita Rundle (tel. no 02392 587311) what plants you are going to provide, that would be very helpful. If you unable to deliver plants on the 26th May please let Rita know and she will come to some arrangement. Last year a good many Friends provided a wide mixture of very saleable plants, it would be excellent if we could again get somewhere close to last years magnificent £450 which was passed on to the NGS and keeps us in their Yellow Book.

All money raised is in aid of The National Gardens Scheme Charities who expect to donate £1.8 million a year which is shared amongst 1000 or so charities, many well known Nationally and many others that need help.

THE FRIENDS SPRING NEWS LETTER, 2008

Minutes of the Friends 15th AGM, March 1st 2008

Chairman Don Cripps welcomed the Deputy Mayor of Gosport, Cllr. Derek Kimber and his wife Pat, Cllr's Peter Edgar and Mark Hook, Doctor Celia Clark (Chairman Portsmouth Society) and over a 100 Friend's to the Parish Centre.

Apologies had been received from many unable to come.

Minutes of the last AGM were approved with an overwhelming show of hands.

The Chairman's Report

In the year 2007 the Crescent Garden was awarded its fourth Green Flag by the Civic Trust and jointly with St. Mark's Churchyard achieved our second Green Heritage Site award from English Heritage. The Green flag was formally hoisted by the Mayor Cllr. Keith Gill on the 19th September, who was then given a conducted tour of the Churchyard. The Garden also was the subject of a half-page article in the latest edition of the Coastline magazine. Recently Gosport Borough Council has indicated that it would like to see other green spaces in the Borough qualifying for similar awards in the future.

Thanks to Gosport Borough Council's 'Streetscene' Department and a skilled metal worker our attractive fountain, which has been vandalised three times during the last 8 years, is now fully repaired and up and running once more as a focal point in the garden.

Organisational Changes

Since David Merritt joined the Committee as Secretary, Wendy has been free to concentrate fully on Garden matters as our expert Curator working in close co-operation with the newly formed Gosport Borough Council Working Group. GBC is considering re-organising their management of Parks and Green Spaces so that the various responsibilities for their development and maintenance may come under one department alone – called 'Streetscene'.

I am confident that these management developments will strengthen the application of the Borough's Operating Procedures for controlling any money-making activities held in the garden in the future. As you know these procedures were produced after joint discussions between us and the Borough councillors and staff in 2006.

Last year the only significant money-making events to be held in the garden were our Garden Party and Plant Sale. The Operating Procedure allowed minor events such as a small drinks table in support of Wedding photographs. About half a dozen of these were booked towards the end of the season but were not monitored and so were not held strictly within the limits laid down. However some progress was made and I am confident that the new management organisation will improve control much more in 2008.

Garden Activities

The following took place:

The Plant Sale on the 28th May – very successful with plenty of bargains and a very good attendance.

The Chernobyl children's party on the 27th June. Organised by Leslie Flett and her team very successfully. It is such a pleasure to see the children enthusiastically enjoying their games, races and Treasure Hunt – and we much enjoyed their singing and dancing.

The Garden Party on the 16th June – Well planned and conducted last year by our usual devoted Team – too many to name and we made sure that we held it strictly within the Council's Operating Procedures to confirm that they were practical to implement.

The Coffee morning on the 23rd November in the Parish Centre. Plenty of bargains and refreshments, well attended, we raised almost £500 for our funds.

Visits

Two successful visits in 2007:

Wakehurst Place on the 21st May, organised by Pam and John Dimmock.

Hinton Ampner and Bramdean House on the 12th September, organised by Roy and Joan Anderson.

For 2008, Pam and John have already organised a two-day visit to two very different gardens in France from the 7th to 9th May for which there are still some vacancies.

Several suggestions have been made for an Autumn visit, but so far there have been no volunteers to organise one. Plenty of help and advice available from past experience. We shall need help in organising and serving the essential Pimms at the Garden Party. David Wardle our Treasurer has done this most successfully for some years and it is time he was freed to relax at this annual event.

We also need members to contribute and supply our catering needs for the Garden Party.

People to help and Plants to be donated for our Plant Sale on the 26th May.

Finally I would like to thank those of our members who find the time to assist regularly in maintaining the Garden itself, all members of your Committee who take on the responsibility of representing you in making decisions - and those who devote their effort to the planning and conduct of all our other activities - including of course those who have arranged today's AGM

Friends Curator's Report

Wendy said that to allow Dr Clark enough time for her presentation she would give her report on gardening matters in the forthcoming Spring newsletter (see pages 8-11)

Treasurer's Report

On the back of your agenda you should find a copy of the 2007 statement of income and expenditure. It follows the well-worn format that I have been using for the past eight years, and as on previous occasions the last year's figures are in the right hand column for general comparison. As usual I do not intend going through the statement line by line but I will just try to highlight a few of the salient points.

Firstly the income from subscriptions, donations and the surplus from events have remained fairly constant. The plant sale was particularly successful despite the atrocious weather and bitter cold. However the money from the event plus the collection from the yellow box by the gate from visitors to the Garden helped to increase our contribution to the National Gardens Yellow Scheme to £450. The Council grant for the Trainee Gardener reflected a full 12 months as opposed to only 9 months in 2006.

With regard to expenditure items these naturally showed an increase in payments to the Trainee Gardener as she has worked for the full 12 months. However this was slightly offset by the reduction in the help from Mark Haskey our previous qualified gardener who was only used on one occasion during the year. There was also a greater expenditure on new or replacement plants which is part of an ongoing programme to restock. In this respect we will need to update and replace some tools and equipment during the current year.

While therefore the overall financial position appears reasonably healthy and the surplus of £699 was pleasing there could be greater expenditure in the pipeline with the possible contribution to further tree work, and an increase from the Friends towards the cost of the Trainee especially if the Council grant was not continued at its present level. Furthermore the basic costs of providing the newsletter, printing, postage, insurance, fountain electricity, etc are all steadily rising therefore the Committee felt that it would prudent to make the subscription £3 in 2009 instead of the current and this year's £2. You will have a full 12 months to save up or raid the piggy bank.

I commend the acceptance of the accounts which have again been audited by Ian Gallett (at no expense to the Friends). If you have any questions I will do my best to answer them. Thank you for your attention.

The accounts were accepted by the Friends.

Election of Committee

The present Committee were all voted in by a show of hands, no objections, additionally two new committee were welcomed by the Friends', details below:

New Committee Member – Pam Mawby
Proposer – Betty Cripps
Seconded – Elisabeth Russell
New Committee Member – Pam Jackson
Proposer – Jill White
Seconded – June Whitfield

A presentation to Jill Streatfeild-James in recognition of many years on the Friends' Committee was then made by Wendy on the Friends' behalf.

AOB

Cllr Peter Edgar gave a short speech which included the offer/possibility that GBC might be in a position to award the Friends' of Crescent Garden some money of the order of £1000 to £2000 towards a major project in the Garden should one occur. This was very welcome news and much appreciated by the Friends.

Pam Dimmock gave an update with reference to the arrangements for the visit to France 7-9 May 2008. Pam invited Friends' to visit her Notice Board during the refreshment interval.

The Deputy Mayor – Cllr Derek Kimber

Cllr Kimber described how pleased he was to have been invited with his wife. Crescent Garden he said spoke for itself, always looking beautiful and whenever you go you see something new. Without the Garden there will not be the Friends, and without the Friends there would not be the Garden as it is today or welcoming us your guests as your friends.

Derek went on to say there are moves afoot to engender a neighbourhood interest in a new urban park on the Chalk Farm Estate at Lee-on-the-Solent. Gosport Borough Council was attempting to create a community approach along similar lines as that achieved by the Friends of Crescent Garden. The Crescent Garden he said was a great asset to Gosport.

Derek said he hoped that in 30 to 40 years time that the pathway project, on the Chalk Farm Estate might compete with Friends of Crescent Garden and concluded his speech by wishing the Friends' good luck for the future

The Chairman called an end to the AGM Meeting and welcomed Dr Celia Clark to address the Meeting with her presentation.

Presentation by Dr Celia Clark – Portsmouth Harbour UNESCO World Heritage Site Steering Group.

Wendy opened the presentation by introducing Dr Celia Clark.

In 1994 I had a letter from the Portsmouth Society, asking if I would talk about Crescent Garden. I was flattered but terrified, it was the first time I'd ever been asked to do this. It was then that I met Celia, its Chairman, for the first time, and her boundless energy, interest and enthusiasm made everything seem possible, and exciting.

Those qualities seem to thrive on challenge, and the bid to achieve recognition for Portsmouth harbour as the first maritime World Heritage Site is certainly a major one, with great potential benefits for the whole area around us. Celia is the Project Manager of this ambitious undertaking which is being built up from the grass roots of community involvement, and we're extremely fortunate to have her here today.

I am very happy to bid her a warm welcome on behalf of us all.

Dr Clarke thanked Wendy for her introduction: she was very pleased to be with us, and thanked the Friend's for inviting her.

She had admired the beauty of Crescent Garden for many years and hoped that Portsmouth City Council would give her the same support that Gosport Borough Council gives to Crescent Garden.

It was in November 2006 when the Project first started. It was very important that local people were involved in this initiative. The ambition is **huge**, basically you are talking about putting this area upon an international map. The extent of the draft proposed World Heritage area is from Portsmouth and surrounding areas, to Portsdown Hill, to Eastney, south to Bembridge IOW, and from Cowes IOW north to Warsash.

Note prominent place names are quoted, precise boundaries may differ slightly.

So in 2006 we looked at what made this area important. In discussions she was told that Portsmouth was an ugly working class City, 'so we had to start looking at what was so special about Portsmouth and the area of interest'. The Block Mills in the Naval Dockyard amongst many others stood out as it was the first of its kind.

The exciting prospect – to inscribe Portsmouth Harbour, Isle of Wight and Spithead on the list, of World Heritage sites – would be the world's first Cultural Seascape to be included.

Dr Clark described a number of people and organisation involved with the process for attempting to get through the first process in what will be a long hard task, and that is for the Project to be accepted as a worthy case for consideration and receive nomination status, the first step on the ladder. Then we would be in competition with a large number of other Projects whose causes have already been considered worthy of consideration. Only one Project is usually accepted each year. So it is a long process.

David Michelmore of ICOMOS – the international advisory body which advises UNESCO - recently outlined the World Heritage site bidding process, which in the UK is controlled by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's Tentative List. He has worked with Dr Clark before and been successful in other bids worldwide.

Dr Clark remarked that she and Gary Momber of the Hampshire and Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology described the unique combination of geography and history which shaped this key part of the Solent. The theme of the bid was Defence of the Realm. The Dockyard and its supporting establishments: Gunwharf, ordnance, victualling, ship testing and hospitals were distinctive to the area's history, and they have been defended from enemy attack by successive layers of defensive structures. The Royal Navy and Dockyard continue to defend the nation's interest – a living tradition.

Dr Clark said there were some concerns in some quarters that if Portsmouth was to get World Heritage Status it would stop or interfere with other projects deemed important, to those who have commercial interests and/or the well being of improving the areas encompassed within the boundaries of the area covered by the Heritage site. The Royal Navy has voiced its concern. Dr Clark assured us that the Heritage award would not frustrate economic progress and would not become just another layer of bureaucracy or indeed impede the way in which the Royal Navy, for instance, operates within the harbour? She continued by saying that if for

a moment the Project Team believed any of these things to be true then they would not be continuing with the bid.

The Project Team are now planning Phase 2 – to widen their membership, and to work on the medium-term gains which will reward the process, whether or not they succeed with world recognition.

These include:

- A cultural heritage-led regeneration theme: defence of the realm.
- A significant international focus on the area.
- Co-ordination of policies around what we perceive as one place.
- Increased collaboration between key harbour/waterfront authorities and agencies – needed to plan the future of the area.
- Integration of planning around harbour and on Ryde, Gosport and Southsea waterfronts including a tall buildings policy.
- Opportunities for joint tourist marketing and promotion.
- Increased appreciation and protection of marine industry/nature conservation/port matters.
- Raised awareness of Portsmouth Harbour and Spithead heritage value among regional and national agencies and bodies, e.g. DCMS, English Heritage, SEEDA, PUSH, HLF etc.
- Increased opportunities for grants, project funding and inward investment by gathering interests under one over-arching theme.
- Raising the profile of the area with residents and visitors, increasing visitor numbers and usage of attractions and local businesses.
- Cementing the primacy of waterfront and harbour within the harbour communities identity.
- Protection and enhancement of public access to the water.

World Heritage status would help to preserve and sustain the heritage – built, underwater, archaeology, cultural, natural – by emphasising its importance worldwide; to local people, to the local economy and to future generations.

Dr Clark suggested that we should use the naval, military, dockyard, ordnance, victualling and medical legacy as a springboard for new creative visions for the harbour and Isle of Wight communities. The Project's Steering Group would welcome views and suggestions regarding places of interest from every local community whose support was essential for success.

Dr Clark asked if there were any questions:

There was much interested response from the Friends'.

The Chairman thanked Dr Clark for a most enlightening presentation.

“The past is a present to the future”

Dates for Diaries

The Plant Sale: Monday 26th May 2008 from 10am - noon in the Garden (Bank Holiday)

Chernobyl Party: Monday 16th June 2008 from 2- 5pm in the Garden

The Friends Garden Party: Saturday 21st June 2008 from 6-8pm

The Coffee Morning: Friday 5th December 2008 Parish Centre from 1045am-1230pm

The next AGM: Saturday the 28th February 2009 Parish Centre at 2.30pm

David Merritt, Friends' Hon. Secretary

The Curator's Gardening Report

A long hard look...

Every garden is changing all the time; gardening could be described as managing the changes. Some are planned and waited for, and are a joy: the growth of the trailing white Chinese Wisteria, now draping itself spectacularly around a dark green Bay tree - and the increasingly extravagant swags and curtains of climbing roses. They should look stunning by mid-May, weather permitting, in the ornamental shrubberies.

But time, mistakes, pests and disasters can blur the most carefully hatched plans into muddled confusion.

Plants that seemed ideal for their situation can turn out to have criminally invasive tendencies, and be almost indestructible. Shrubs grow, and lean, and push their neighbours into near-oblivion. Flowers may have seeded obligingly - but not always where you hoped they would! Worse, some perennials, faithful for years, have simply disappeared. Slugs? Short-lived? Unhappy? Whatever the reason, their loss spoils the colour scheming and leaves a gap that must be filled.

And the problems of replacing our lost roses must be confronted and overcome.

Trees need the longest-term planning, especially in a small garden like this.

It's easy to take long-established old trees for granted, but like us they inevitably begin to wrinkle and creak, and they too need care and assessment. Some of our trees have been showing signs of stress due to compaction of the ground. Leaf loss and dieback are danger signals.

Searching black rhizomorphs of Honey fungus seek out weaker woody plants whose health is their only defence.

Then there are the Bays, indispensable, sweet smelling - surely no Friends pay for packets of Bay leaves? - but how quickly they grow!! They need a maintenance plan of their own.

(April 6th - An unexpected and quite different problem interrupted these notes; a blizzard. In just 3 hours since 8am it's filled the Garden with inches of snow, burying brightly flowered tulips, weighting the taller roses almost to ground level, and smothering clouds of Forget-me-nots. Excited parents and children built a Snowman – five foot high and stout with it, so I took over an old hat for him, and a plastic rake to shake the burden of snow from the most oppressed of the

roses and shrubs. It was extraordinary, flicking drifts of snow from brightly glowing scarlet and yellow tulips that sprang up in indignant relief. The Forget-me-nots looked very dishevelled, but the children adored it – when will they see snow again?)

The Green Flag – judgement on Wednesday, 14th May.

Although it's a bit unnerving, having outside judges coming to check if we are still worthy of our Green Flag - besides the ongoing monitoring by the National Gardens' Scheme, to check if the Garden still merits inclusion in their famous Yellow Book - it does concentrate the mind! It's no good being laid-back about the bindweed, hoping that "informal" covers a multitude of sins, and putting off all the problems for another year. These people are gardeners who can spot a cover-up a mile off.

With all these concerns in mind, the Friends' Volunteers did a walkabout last Autumn, and took a long hard detached look before deciding how we were going to manage changes that worried us.

Thankfully, we have been blessed with more friendly Volunteers, who have made everything possible. They are a wonderful team; their Wednesdays have become a happy institution that really achieves results. We tackled things one at a time.

Before each **Seasonal Meeting**, Rita Rundle and I, with any other gardening Committee members that can join us, meet up in the Garden for a **Working Group meeting** with Council Officers. There's **Caroline** (Parks and Gardens), **Dave**, (trees) and **Samantha** (Leisure Services)

This works really well: they listen to our concerns, arrange to help where they can, and convey them to higher authority where they are not empowered to do so. Budgetary considerations are considered elsewhere, and inevitably have the final word.

Working Group meetings are minuted, and relayed the following week to the Friends' Seasonal Meeting, (which also deals with all the Friends' events and outings and membership arrangements.)

So: our plan of campaign was discussed with Caroline and Dave towards the end of Summer 07 - and we are still working on it!

One delightful change - The Fountain, vandalised for the 3rd time is now straight and complete for the first time for a couple of years, thanks to skilful repair work organised by Samantha Voller of Gosport Borough Council.

Unwelcome changes - The railings bed - facing the fountain - was overwhelmed with Cistus, never an upright shrub, and now too large for its location.

The demurely attractive Alexandrian laurel between the bushes of Stanwell's Perpetual white roses was making a subversive take-over bid. Its roots were discovered foraging everywhere. Its orange berries, so welcome for 11 late Summers, had germinated by the thousand, each with tenacious roots, hidden under roses and the Cistus. The parent clumps had spread vastly and we decided they must be lifted. It was unbelievable that those 4ft ornamental evergreen fronds could have turned into an Occupying Power.

David Palmer, a regular volunteer from Stubbington, came to the rescue with a pickaxe. (Who do you think you are kidding, Mr Laurel?) It took him weeks of Wednesday mornings, but he spearheaded a marathon clearance by the Volunteers. There was some soul-searching about the Cistus, they flower so generously, for a long season, day after day. But they had smothered the original border of Pinks, and it had to be admitted that they were the wrong scale for the bed; Cistus resent being pruned hard.

Restoring the long run of Pinks was a first concern, and it was wonderful that a donation from the family of Malcolm Compston enabled us to contact Southview Nurseries, who have a National Collection of Dianthus, and order the historical varieties we needed. Dad's Favourite, Paisley Gem, The Bride, and Rose de Mai, have perfumed English gardens for centuries.

Keith Perceval of Groundwork Solent asked if we'd like a bit of help, and he brought three lads for a day. They worked like beavers, riddling the whole of the year's leaf compost, and barrowed it all down to spread on the central beds - brilliant! We were really grateful to them.

The new Everedge around the beds makes a great frame for the new planting. Although the Alexandrian Laurel had looked good for 11 years, and we had potted up seedlings for replacement, we thought better of it. There would only be another day of reckoning in ten years' time. For the sake of our successors we planted clumps of the splendid Geranium Palmatum instead - another evergreen, that flowers all Summer. Although a great seeder, it's a lot easier to dig up! Instead of the Cistus, 6 dwarf Pomegranates were sourced near Evesham, and Rita and I collected them, together with a January flowering small tree with a beautiful scent. ('Wintersweet' given in memory of Mrs Goss by her family).

More Cistus, and the Alexandrian Thug - sorry, laurel - can still be enjoyed, in the Shrubbery beds along Terrace Walk, where they have more room to throw their weight about. In the Autumn Newsletter I mentioned a sub-shrub with elegant black stems, gracefully divided leaves, flat silken violet flowers and wonderful egg-shaped yellow/orange fruit. Related to the potato, *Solarum laciniata* has the much more memorable name of Kangaroo Apple. Michael, a young visiting Australian botanist, said he had them at home in Melbourne - were they *really* in England before 1850? Ours, we told him, came from Australia via the Chelsea Physick Garden, where they grew from 1772. "The Abos pound the fruit into a paste and give it to their women folk", Michael told us.

"What for?" we asked, fascinated. A ladies' Viagra? Could this be a really original Raffle prize? "It's a good contraceptive - but a bit mushy." he grinned. No, it couldn't.

Another keen gardening visitor was attending a course at the Naval Medical school - he was perhaps the first to come from **Estonia**, where he had a large garden. He said he admired ours very much.

The Roses, we found a wholesale Nursery in the New Forest, and collected ten replacement roses. Somehow their names conjure up their scent and velvety colours: "Ispahan", "Tuscany Superb", "Felicite Parmentier". They will be planted with the recently developed "Rootgrow", which was mentioned last Autumn and stimulates rapid root growth at planting. This helps the plant's immunity from soil-borne diseases. All the existing roses have been fed, and so has the Box hedge.

