



FRIENDS OF CRESCENT GARDEN

THE FRIENDS' AUTUMN NEWSLETTER, 2009

Coffee Morning – Friday the 4th of December – Parish Centre
1030 – 1230. Entrance fee remains £1.

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

"Interpretation: An explanation given: a way of explaining" -Shorter Oxford Dictionary

I have been devising an updated **Interpretation Board (IB)** for the Garden and it's been an interesting exercise. It seemed a fairly simple task - we already had a researched drawing, and an 1830 clip from the Hampshire Telegraph. Find another old photograph or two, a suitable heading, and you're there. I thought.

This would have been fine in 1991, but eighteen years have changed the scenario all round. A brief search online was enough to make me realise that the IB has become an essential communication tool for every Park, Nature Reserve, or Heritage Building worth its salt. It needs thought, from every angle, to make it work.

For a start, Crescent Garden is now better known. Many visitors come here, drawn by the Yellow Book, and curious to find out more.

Some are clearly knowledgeable gardeners, interested in the plants, and where we source some of them.

We've had a few real specialists (one had made a lifetime study of Wallflowers!) A professional though long-retired Rose-grower is brought here occasionally by his daughter; and there are often keen Garden/Local Historians.

Equally, some visitors simply enjoy the garden, cheerfully confessing they don't know a thing about plants - but could we please tell them the name of the scented flowering shrub by the gate?

A lot of people just walk their dogs, as they have done for years, sometimes twice in a day. They see the Garden changing through the seasons and they usually take real pleasure in the flowers, thanking the Volunteers for all their efforts and frequently asking questions.

Then there are the younger visitors. (*Two very small ones learned to walk here - but that was largely through trial and error and a tenderly*

patient grandfather.) Older children may not ask questions; but they are happily responsive to anything that appeals to their imagination - and their enquiring minds should have proper consideration.

So, how to 'explain' Crescent Garden in an accessible way for everyone? *How, when and why it came about; what was it like then? What's a community garden, whose Garden is it?*

Why does it look like it does now, what do you mean, a Regency garden?

Who looks after it, what's the name of that tree over there? – that blue flower? - that Rose??

I've had lots of advice - and some technological help, which saved the day.

"Information, well presented and illustrated, should stimulate interest, enhancing the visiting experience..."

"People won't have their glasses on, it has to be easy to read."

"Pictures tell a story best, you don't want too much text, nobody bothers to read it, anyway."

"Too many words are BORING!"

"Children, especially, should get a real vision of how it was in 1830"

"You've got 14ins by 48ins to fit it all in"

"Can you send it all on your Computer?" (**Who, me??!**)

It added a few weeks' work to the year it took to conjure up the 1830 view: of a re-built Reading Room, assorted children and dogs, horses and a carriage, fashions of the day, and a bona fide 1830 Ratcatcher - but finally it's done, and ready for the Council to have it made into the new Interpretation Board for Crescent Garden.

I do hope it works well, and I would like to thank **Bill Rundle** (on computers) and **Reg Paradise** (on camera) for their patient and expert help.

Spring/Summer 2009

Some challenges since the last Newsletter: mostly due to the strangely unfriendly, windy weather - floods and drought, and weeks of clouded skies in Summer. But there have been some lovely days, and there are some really good things to report.

A new Curator for the Friends.

This is certainly one of them!

Gilly Jaynes has been working with the Volunteers for about a year. Quite apart from her obvious and very welcome expertise, she has that indefinable but essential mixture of energetic love and enthusiasm for gardening, together with a down-to-earth empathy with all the important community considerations that are the mainspring of every public garden.

I discovered that Gilly is a musician who runs a well-known local Choir, 'Viva Voce', a great fundraiser for many charities. I then found out Gilly is actually establishing a small Nursery, propagating, raising and selling plants of a high standard at various markets around South Hampshire. Added to her increasing interest in Garden History - Well, need I say more? I could hardly bear to ask her if she would like to take over from me as your Curator, in case she said 'no'.

To my intense relief and pleasure Gilly welcomed the challenge, but asked if we could have a slow, gentle transitional turn-over, of all the many aspects of the Garden. Gilly attended the August Seasonal Committee meeting as our Deputy Curator, and has already been in on several of the Onsite Meetings with the Council Officers who work with us.

A lot of new planting in the Garden has already been grown from seed in Gilly's greenhouse; white Foxgloves for next Spring; those tall, exotic Tobacco plants, *Nicotiana sylvestris*; and already, this Autumn, the vividly jolly 'Marvel of Peru'.

I feel the Friends and myself are extraordinarily fortunate in my successor, to whom I will very happily hand over the reins at our AGM on 27th February 2010.

We had a great Plant Sale -

- In May, as always on the second Bank Holiday; and thankfully in much better weather! The Sale raised most of our annual contribution to the National Gardens Scheme, whose nation-wide publicity brings visitors from far afield, to both Crescent Garden and St. Mark's Churchyard. We have this year sustained high enough standards to be included, with S. Mark's Churchyard, in the **Yellow Book for 2010**, which provides a respected and consistent hall-mark of quality for prospective visitors.

The Partnership with GBC.

The Friends have always tried to achieve very occasional but consistent contact with GBC at the most senior level, so that we can touch base with them on any evolving plans and policies they may have in mind for Crescent Garden.

The **Community and Environment Board** - which controls all the Borough's Parks, among many other responsibilities - now has a new Chairman, **Cllr. Graham Burgess**, of Lee-on -Solent.

We were able to give him a brief slide-show of the Garden, and its usage, since January to show how the Borough and the wider community benefit from our Partnership.

Cllr. Burgess seemed impressed, and asked us to e-mail any outstanding concerns to him direct. Cllr. Burgess also asked if he might attend our next **On-site Seasonal Meeting** with the regular team of Council officers we work with: the first Chairman to do so. We were

delighted, and it proved to be a really positive and constructive encouragement for everyone concerned.

The Green Flag and S.E. in Bloom

Although disappointed that the Green Flag was withheld by the Judges this year, the Volunteers were delighted that the Garden was given a Silver-Gilt Award in the Small Parks category for S.E. in Bloom - which contributed to Gosport's excellent overall achievement of eight awards, including a Silver in the Small Town Category.

Gilly and I have now had time to study the Green Flag **Judges' Report**, and we both feel that there is no problem there that cannot be put right, or satisfactorily accounted for.

Promotion of Green Flag Parks is evidently a particular concern.

One of the required items is the new Interpretation Board, now well under way: it should be in place quite soon.

Parks Officer Caroline Smith has already arranged production of Leaflets describing the Garden and other information they now require can be readily supplied by the Friends.

Cllr Burgess has said he would like to see the Green Flag restored to Crescent Garden in 2010, and we will make every effort to achieve this as a Partnership endeavour.

Volunteers.

Achieving this is enabled by our great team of Volunteers, which has been fantastic this year. Sadly we're losing Gail Hornshaw to Bath, where her daughter expects twins shortly. Thank you, Gail, for all your companionable hard work, it was lovely having you on the team.

We are still enough to make maintenance Wednesdays cheerful rather than tinged with anxiety; the coffee still flows, with the fun and the sense of achievement, for anyone who thinks they may like to try joining us.

Just turn up, any Wednesday morning, no previous experience necessary!

Trainees.

Our new WRAGS Trainee, Sophie Lawrence, settled in briefly, but sadly was forced into abandoning her traineeship by the recession. We were very lucky; the WRAGS organisation actually had another candidate for us, **Wendy Hobson**. *(In case you've forgotten, that's the 'Womens return to Amenity Gardening Scheme.*

Wendy, a part-time teacher for children with special needs, is very keen to make her time with us part of a formal horticultural qualification; she has already done an RHS course at Staunton Country Park. WRAGS thoroughly approves of her ambition, and suggested we make contact with **Sparsholt Agricultural College**; which may be able to offer

additional training to round out what Wendy receives here. We have always hoped for a link with Sparsholt, but neither Gilly nor I have horticultural qualifications, other than experience, this may be a problem for them: we hope the Yellow Book hallmark might help!

Gilly and Wendy are pursuing this, which could have wider implications for Crescent Garden as a recognised training source, but it's early days yet.

Photographic records

Ongoing seasons in the Garden have been photographically recorded this year, together with every plant and flower, as well as many examples of public usage and enjoyment.

Some of this record has already proved invaluable. S.E. in Bloom Judging was in late July - not a peak time for Crescent Garden - so we put a slide-show of this year's high spots together for the Judges to see, having discovered that this was in fact allowed. They then went across to inspect the July Garden, and were really enthusiastic, asking lots of questions about its history and the trees and plants, and a great many about the Friends' organisation.

Several pictures would make very attractive Post Cards; a possible item for sale at the **Coffee Morning** on 4 December?

To all Friends of the Garden, past and present, since the beginning, in 1991

Although I will be handing over to Gilly in February 2010, this is the last Newsletter during my time as the Friends' Curator, and I would like to record a very heartfelt thank-you, for all the fantastic support you have unfailingly given me over so many years. To have been given the chance to work creatively on such a project has been a rare privilege, and I have felt it a singular honour to be your Curator.

I will of course continue to be a Wednesday Volunteer - (and Julian says the Caff will stay open!)

Wendy Osborne

Friends Events during 2009

6th May – Visit to Waddesdon Manor – Buckinghamshire

This magnificent house and grounds in the style of a 16th- century French chateau built for the Rothschilds in the 19th century was much enjoyed by 40 Friends.

Thanks go to Pam Dimmock once again for organising so well a very enjoyable day out.

20th June – The Friends' Eighteenth Garden Party

254 adults, 15 under 15 years and 4 under 7 years (plus 16 guests including the Mayor Cllr Diane and Honorary Alderman Ken Searle) attended.

Notes regarding Ticket Sales - by Gill Comrie

1st ticket application arrived **8th** April (not available before 13th May).

Last ticket application arrived at 5.50pm on **20th** June!! Sale of tickets ended after 13th June.

2 people requested duplicate tickets as they had mislaid original.

Total number of ticket transactions **126** which generated **134** phone calls by Gill (this does not include calls to committee members).

28 postal applications of which 17 provided the **wrong** size envelope for ticket.

2 envelopes were unstamped, thought 's' stood for 'self' not stamped. 1 envelope was already sealed.

13 cash purchases (told by one person "Banks prefer cash").

Several people admitted **not** reading advertisement for Garden Party and phoned Gill to find out how to get tickets.

Gill arranged several periods each week for ticket payment/ collection, gave people a choice or made separate/individual arrangement – most very happy but one Saturday between 9am – 1230 expected 10 to collect – **Nil** turned up!!

Several called on off chance that Gill was in and expected instant response even during meal times/entertaining or late evening.

Some told Gill they had called at the door several times and were surprised Gill was not in.

Only one real complaint – delivered very mildly, a gentleman thought the arrangements for acquiring tickets were too inflexible.

New members – 2 couples and 1 couple rejoined.

73 subs collected and 3 for 2010/11.

Having said all of the above, the vast majority of Friends were compliant, courteous and very appreciative and admitted they really **wouldn't** want to sell tickets.

The above comments are reported because Gill's availability is not limitless and she does a marvellous job, it is hoped that Friends will bear this in mind for next year. The Committee and Gill bend over backwards to be helpful and to encourage as many Friends to attend the Garden Party which they hope all will enjoy.

Some staff changes: in addition to Abbie Fairclough and Jill Parry and the young servers. For perhaps the first time Pam Jackson managed to

hire a number of trainees from Fareham College to assist in providing food and Pimms (thus overcoming the requirement that alcoholic drinks can only be served by adults). This seemed to work out well,

Guy Sitwell's new tent layout and the use of the East wing entrance achieved a better distribution of Friends and their guests. This complied with the need to confine the Party to the East wing, in line with the G.B.C. Operating Conditions for the Garden.

The larger PIMMs tent, first port of call, was more convenient for Pam Mawby and her team to produce the refreshing drink most of us enjoy.

Thanks to Lesley Flett and her helpers for providing the soft drinks and food (which looked really scrumptious) for the young ones.

Thanks to all those that provided their usual high standard of food. What would we do without them?

Fabulous strawberries organised by Jane Harris and collected by David Wardle.

Thank you to the Gate team (usual stalwarts David Fowke, Murray Bell, Gordon Cochran, Guy Sitwell, David Merritt and new-comer Paul Marsh) for welcoming the guests. Your efforts were very much appreciated. Well done Pam Dimmock and her very able helpers which raised raffle takings to £628 – despite numbers being slightly down on last year.

The Committee's verdict – very good. Any suggested changes/ comments or improvements. Tell us?

24th June The Chernobyl Children's Party 2009

The weather was sunny and warm as the mini bus, with the ten visiting children, eight girls and two boys, from Chernobyl arrived. As usual, all wore broad smiles and happily called out "Hello", as they excitedly ran into the garden. The garden, looked a picture with the striped pavilion, pretty bunting and tea table groaning with fantastic food, provided by volunteers. Photos of the children-were expertly taken by John Barnard, the children, split into two teams headed up by Kate Barnard and Kath Johnston, and then the games commenced..... and what fun they were too. Tails were pinned on a badly drawn donkey (maybe a bit of cheating by one team?), balloons passed between legs, cuddly toys thrown into buckets, lots of running.....mostly by children but by adults too (yes very amusing) and then the pinnacle of all good parties.....the three legged race! This was so

popular it had to be replayed three times!!! In between, games and races the children enjoyed the delicious food supplied by volunteers, and played with an assortment of Barbie dolls, ball games and croquet, which was a huge hit (!) with the boys. This year was particularly special as David Merritt invited his Russian neighbour, Nadine Dunning, her husband Peter and Lera her 11 year old daughter along, all are bi-lingual and the children were delighted to have new friends on board.

After tea the children entertained us with traditional songs, all beautifully sung in tune, with real meaning and with such innocence. This is always a magical moment of the afternoon, cue a few sniffs and wet eyes in the audience.

Normal service was resumed, as the two teams went in search of treasure by following a trail set earlier by their leaders. And what treasure it was too. A huge thanks to Maggie Cochran, who really is becoming a treasure picking expert, and makes up a bag of goodies for each child.

No children's party would be complete without a cake with candles, and it has become a tradition for the party to be rounded off with a delicious chocolate cake courtesy of Felicity Anderson. She inscribes the cake with the words that translate to "Dear friends we love you" and our dear friends really loved the cake! By now John had returned with an individually framed photo of each child, which was given out to them as a lasting memory of their party at Crescent Road garden.

Thanks go to Sharon Briny, the local organiser for the charity, Chernobyl Children Lifeline and to all the local host families for allowing us to welcome the children to the party in the garden. A huge thanks to all the "Friends" who volunteered. It was terrific to welcome some new helpers this year. It is a real fun afternoon and anyone who would like to be involved in any way next year, please contact Lesley Flett on 02392613907.

Lesley Flett

23rd September – Visit to Arundel Castle – West Sussex

53 Friends travelled to Arundel Castle some for the first time, some had visited many times, all were much impressed with what they saw. The original castle was founded on Christmas Day 1067 by Roger de Montgomery, Earl of Arundel, one of William the Conqueror's most loyal barons. Many of the original features have survived, and the Castle, with its great Keep, is everyone's idea of what a mediaeval Castle should look like.

With the Gold *Plus* entrance ticket we were entitled to visit all the impressive features, Castle Bedrooms, Main Castle Rooms, Castle Keep, Italian Chapel, The Collector Earl's Garden and Gardens and Grounds. The East Wing is still lived in by the current descendants of the original owner.

It was Pam Jackson's first attempt at organising a visit for the Friends and a jolly good job she made of it: it was much appreciated.

A short anecdote by one of our regular gardeners

My wife and I took on our present garden about 25 years ago. Sarah is the gardener. She knows the names of plants and flowers, grows the garden produce and fulfils rituals like 'pricking out', and so on. I can only name vegetables when put on a plate in front of me.

To test my potential as a gardener Sarah set the task of trimming an overgrown holly bush. So I took hold of the electric hedge trimmer and trimmed one side and then the other to even it up - and the other two to even it up a bit more. I showed my efforts to the gardener. " Oh! God", she cried, "You've turned it into a cabbage stalk!".

So I was dispatched to the top right hand corner of the garden and told not to come out till I'd made some compost. That's what I've done for the past 25 years. I produce the odd bag of compost to keep the peace but spend most of my time trying to do SuDoku, the Easy ones, and remembering to look busy at the sound of approaching footsteps.

One of the reasons I volunteered at Crescent gardens is that I might do something useful in the gardening line. Wendy has been super in her tuition and encouragement. I've been at it for three to four years so was thrilled recently when she said, "David, I think it's time for you to graduate from cutting bay tree shoots, I've a little job you might like to have a go at." So she took me to this holly bush. Now, I know what you're thinking! But, after 25years I must have improved. No, I didn't use hedge trimmers or shears but got hold of those things that look like short scissors - can't remember the name and even if I could I couldn't spell it.

I approached my task with enthusiasm tempered by caution, snipping away contentedly for several hours. I thought it looked pretty good.

As you all know, Wendy is the sweetest natured person you could ever hope to meet and would not hurt a chap's feelings for the world. But something told me things weren't quite right. All she said was, "I can see you like a rounded effect". Which puzzled me because what else would I like? A square effect? An oval?

But I know what the problem is. I don't have an artistic bone in my body. Sarah and I love Wendy's portrayals of the Gardens and Crescent but how

she achieves these, I can't imagine. The difference is that Wendy would love the sight and feel of plants and flowers while I would be content hacking away at brambles with a reap hook!

But what goes round comes round. A couple of weeks ago Wendy said she had a very important job I might like to tackle. Up in the top right hand corner of the garden are the compost bins. Would I like to sort them out? Of course I'd like to! Some of us are born to compose and some to - well - decompose.

David Palmer

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**, or the Curator – **wjo@osborne21.myzen.co.uk** or any of the committee members.

Annual General Meeting

Saturday 27th February 2009 – Parish Centre, 2-30 – 5pm.
Hope to see you there.

David Merritt

Friend's Hon Secretary

Tel. 02392 582068

Dated: 20th October 2009

