



FRIENDS EVENTS THIS SUMMER

FRIEND OF CRESCENT GARDEN SPRING NEWSLETTER, 2009

DATES FOR DIARIES

The Plant Sale Monday 25th May, from 10 to 12am.

Chernobyl Children's Party Wednesday 24th June, from 2-30 to 5pm

The Friends' Garden Party Saturday 20th June, from 6 to 8pm

The Friends' Coffee Morning Friday 4th December, the Parish Centre at 10.45

The Next AGM Saturday 27th February 2010, the Parish Centre at 2.30.

You can find information on ticket sales for the Garden Party at the end of this Newsletter.

Itinerary for visit to WADDESDON MANOR on Wednesday 6th May

Built for the Rothschilds in the late 19th century in the style of a 16th century French chateau. World renowned collection of French furniture, paintings and decorative arts.

Landscaped park with shady walks, beautiful panoramas, fountains and grottoes. And much more.

Travel in Executive coach (toilet and coffee facilities).

0830 pick up at Parish Centre, Green Road, Alverstoke.

1100 approx. arrive at Waddesdon Manor.

Coffee and biscuits arranged on arrival £2.20 pp.

Free time to allow for visit to grounds and lunch prior to:-

1400 tour of house (1½-2hrs).

Free time.

1700 (flexible) Leave for Alverstoke. Lucketts have agreed to revise this if we feel we wish to return earlier.

There are a few seats still available for Friend's and friends of Friend's. For further details please contact Mrs Pam Dimmock on 02392- 586761.

We plan to while away the return journey with an Exciting Raffle.

Friends' cheques for the visit will be paid into the Bank shortly.

REPORT ON THE FRIENDS' 16TH A.G.M held on the 28th Feb 2009

About 120 Friend's came to a cheerful meeting, attended by His Worshipful the Mayor of Gosport Cllr Derek Kimber and the Mayoress. In the absence through illness of our Chairman, our Treasurer David Wardle took the Meeting, and warmly welcomed everyone, before reading Don Cripps' report.

The Chairman's Report

In 2008 Crescent Garden achieved a 5th Civic Trust Green Flag Award, and in company with St. Mark's Churchyard, a 3rd. Green Heritage Site Award from English Heritage. All thanks to the continued steady hard work of Friends' Garden Volunteers, in partnership with GBC 's Officers and their Green Team.

We understand GBC is keen to achieve Green Flag rated Parks in the Borough.

In 2008 Friends had a lovely Garden Party, a well organised Winter fund-raising Coffee Morning, and a successful Plant Sale, in spite of a soaking downpour. We also hosted our annual Friendly party for the young visitors to Gosport from Chernobyl, and had a highly enjoyable Spring visit to France.

On behalf of the whole Membership, Don expressed warmly appreciative thanks to each and every Friend who gives freely of their time to help make these activities so successful.

As always, we would welcome offers from Friends who might be able to spare the odd hour to help, even in a small way on an occasional basis. There's a surprising range of tasks to suit all talents, that have nothing to do with gardening!

We are also happy to receive suggestions, whether social or horticultural – just contact a Committee member.

The Fountain

Seven years after its installation it has been necessary to replace the two pumps, and the whole system, pool included, needed servicing and a clean out.

An excellent team effort included GBC, whose contractors professionally cleaned out the tank, and a working party headed by experts Bob and David Bone, whose technical expertise devised and installed a repaired timing system at no cost to GBC and very little to the Friends, thanks to their tireless labour.

Very Many Thanks! - from us all.

One incident of vandalism in 2008 necessitated the removal of the top bowl for the Winter months; hopefully Spring will see its return.

Premises Licence for Crescent Garden

At a consultation involving the Licensing Board, Councillors, and the Leisure Services the Chairman, Treasurer, Curator and Committee member Pam Mawby were able to present their concerns, arising from the Garden's small size, historical significance and community maintenance.

In 2006, after similar consultations, a set of Operating Procedures had been drawn up by GBC to govern commercial use of the Garden.

These Procedures, however, have no legal status.

There is no doubt that the best way to make them legally binding would be to incorporate them into the proposed Premises Licence. When the Application for this is made public, we shall assess the situation and keep our members informed. We were, however, assured that sales of alcohol would not be allowed for any event.

The Chairman then thanked all members helping to organise the AGM and the usual delicious tea, adding particular appreciation of the work done each year by Bob and David Bone in setting up the audio and visual systems for our events.

Treasurer's Report

David Wardle, briefly changing hats, assured us that the Friends' income from subscriptions, donations and events has stayed fairly constant.

A statement of the years' finances was provided to everyone and David went through it for the meeting.

Of significant benefit was the restoration of the Council's contribution for funding the Friend's trainee gardener, and the decision to renew this contribution in April for the year 2009/10. The Friends were very grateful for this help.

All the events, particularly the Garden Party, had gone very well, and the finances remain reasonably healthy. With good support from the membership for the events this year it is not expected that subscriptions will need to be raised in 2010.

David ended by thanking Ian Gallet for auditing the accounts at no cost to the Friends, and the accounts were approved by the meeting.

(As always, any member unable to attend can apply for a copy.)

Election of Officers

All Officers were re-elected and Enid Billington was proposed and seconded as a new Committee Member.

David Merritt, Friends' Hon. Secretary

The Curator's Report

This was timed at the end of the Meeting to enable a presentation with a slideshow.

The following is a précis of items covered; further description in Newsletter.

In the Garden it has been an interesting and busy year, though many slightly tender sub-shrubs we were able to enjoy during recent milder years succumbed to this year's severe frosts and will need replacement.

Besides winning the Civic Trust's Green Flag, and the English Heritage Award in tandem with St Mark's Churchyard, Crescent Garden now has the honour of being in the National Gardens' Scheme's famous Yellow Book for the 12th year running.

The yearly Bay tree reductions will continue in March, at the West end - last year work concentrated mostly on the East wing.

Only one real incidence of vandalism: on the whole it's been a better year in that respect. Numerous late evening visits by young people, but they were mostly social events which are fine, as long as drug dealing, damage and underage drinking don't feature as part of the entertainment. Touching wood for 2009.

Besides Friends' events, the Garden was the scene of 14 Wedding photography sessions, and an enthusiastic Carol singing session round the fountain at Christmas.

We are grateful to Gosport Borough Council for generous restoration of part-funding for another Trainee for the Garden when Christine Gwynne ends her contract. Christine will be a hard act to follow! A truly great asset to the team, we have all enjoyed working with her, and especially appreciate her kind offer to continue for a while as a Volunteer to help another trainee -yet to be found! - settle in.

The pending Licence Application for the Garden is of particular concern for the Volunteers who largely maintain it.

As our Chairman noted, we won't know exactly what is proposed until the Application is posted. But we have done our best to ensure it will be framed in a way that gives protection and sustainability to this tiny Registered Historic Garden for everyone's enjoyment, and avoids any commercial exploitation of the considerable Voluntary effort necessary for its maintenance.

We owe particular thanks to a Member who has assisted us, kindly offering help in drafting a constructive and legally informed response to the Application when it's posted, when the public have a chance to express their views. Watch this space!

AOB

Pam Dimmock drew attention to a board detailing the forthcoming visit to Waddeston Manor on May 6, with forms for those interested in going.

Forms are still available for Friends wishing to go to this spectacular NT venue, with fascinating Collections inside and an excellent Restaurant. Contact Pam quickly, though!!!

Rita Rundle appealed for more catering volunteers for the Garden Party.

His Worshipful the Mayor

Cllr Derek Kimber drew the AGM to a close, thanking the Friends and remarking on the large attendance. He hoped such enthusiasm could be generated for a community Garden project dear to his heart at Lee-on-Solent. The Friends were then praised for all their hard work for the community, which was much appreciated by the Council. The Mayor assured the Friends that their concerns would be taken into account in any Licensing decision.

The Chairman ended the Meeting, and a lovely Tea was much enjoyed by all.

THE CURATOR'S NEWSLETTER

First, grateful thanks to the Friends' wonderful team of Volunteers, they've done brilliantly this year (helped, of course, by great coffee).

We have fun and it keeps us fit - why not join us?!!

More thanks: to the Council's Green Team for all their hard work (helped by one tea with 2 lumps, 2 no sugar)...Between us all, we keep that Green Flag flying!!

Discussions with Council Officers on Licensing issues raised some immediate questions, prompting a look back at our history, some thoughtful re-assessment of the future, and some general reflection.

Just why should special consideration be given to this particular garden? Certainly it's very small, so extra vulnerable to wear and tear. It's historically and horticulturally interesting - and it's maintained largely by volunteers. But what else makes it so different from other gardens that special concern should be given to conditions for its protection?

In 1991 it was a straightforward project, with a few enthusiasts, to rescue and restore its historic character. Research and design were the priorities.

Then came the unplanned involvement of a crowd of 11-year olds from a neighbouring estate, an effective reminder that public gardens are for public pleasure (and there aren't all that many enthusiastic garden historians).

For years, the 'Garden Guardians' - as they became - did more than help; they set us on the right road before they grew up and left us.

A listening culture began, with many people having an input on-site. It was noted what groups could benefit most from what the garden had to offer.

Teenagers seemed surprised but pleased to be asked their opinion on what the central feature should be; pensioners insisted on giving contributions for a fountain; interested people came from all over to swap plants.

The enclosing railings and heavy gates made it ideal for mothers with small children, as illustrated in the original design for the central area in 1992.

The level gravel Walk along its long narrow shape encouraged walkers in transit: diagonal views and vistas through the ornamental shrubberies were devised to make their walks more interesting.

The surrounding community showed their appreciation with many generous contributions: trees, labour, and supportive fundraising. Pride was taken in being as self-sufficient as possible, and in the blossoming results.

The truly remarkable thing is that for 18 years a Local Authority has empowered and encouraged a community group to restore and evolve an open space in their own way, identifying and responding both to its history and to local needs, to make it realise its full potential as a welcoming and refreshing place for everyone, with unique appeal for many.

Gosport Borough Council and its Leisure Officers enabled and encouraged this ongoing, careful balancing by the Friends of the many and varied interests involved: wild-life and the environment very much included: no peat, no pesticides.

It's this essential balance and our united achievement we all need to protect.

This is why we trust that the Conditions of any Licence for Crescent Garden will enable everyone to continue building on everything learned over many years of an immensely rewarding and valuable Partnership.

The whole picture - Most of us have a particular loyalty to the green space on our doorstep - but sometimes it's a good thing to take a wider view.

Crescent Garden, for example, can be what it is because of its proximity to Stokes Bay.

Perhaps Gosport's greatest single asset, Stokes Bay's magnificent green recreational space can host innumerable ball games, technology toys, kite flying, beach-combing, paddling, and ice creams by the sea - a wonderful space for children and walkers, flora and fauna.

Because it's next door, Crescent Garden can be a sheltered small haven of serenity and peace for the frail, the very young and the disabled. It's a lovely setting for wedding photographs and family picnics. Flowers and trees, scents and colour give seasons of delight to everyone strolling through.

There are no forbidding notices - 'No ball games' or 'No cycling'. Toddlers trotting after a big ball do no harm; nor will those careful wobbly first rides on new cycles and scooters along Terrace Walk. And notices aren't very welcoming!

But sometimes we do need to explain how damaging proper ball games can be, when the players aren't toddlers anymore- games that could so easily be far less hampered and more fun just round the corner at Stokes Bay. If one group of children plays football or cricket in a public garden everyone can - and does!

There's only so much a small narrow space like this can offer. If it tries to be a playground or a cycle track for allcomers - as a garden, it's lost.

Some wider concerns... The Licensing Initiative has a beneficial side-effect. Because it applies to every publicly owned open space, it reminds us how much they all mean to us. Imagine, for a second, all of them built over, or concreted into 'landscaped' car parks. The quality of life in Gosport, especially for the thousands with little or no garden of their own - for whose benefit many were originally intended - would be impoverished for ever. Every single open space is important to the community's health and well-being. Gosport is fortunate in having a rich variety of them, though some may not be achieving their full potential.

The balance we work for in Crescent Garden is worked on in other gardens where there is community involvement, like The Hermitage, and The Grove. They offer quite different amenities, but the community involvement and concern is vital - as it here, and at Stokes Bay, where many Friends watch over and help in the preservation and enhancement of the natural landscape.

Because of this rich variety, they all need specific consideration – by ourselves, the public, to whom they belong; and by the Local Authority, which manages and maintains them on our behalf

and at our expense. Open green spaces are like a nucleus for neighbourhoods: if they're run down and neglected it affects every one: if they're cherished and flourishing they give us all a strong sense of community well-being.

It is increasingly dangerous to take them for granted. In these times of serious financial crisis, our open green spaces, like everything else, must inevitably come under financial scrutiny. They must give value for money - how much do they benefit the community? Could they be made to earn at least some of the cost of their maintenance? This thinking probably drove the Government's Licensing Initiative. Licensed commercial usage could give occasional pleasure to many, and the fees paid could help with maintenance costs. But besides the danger to the quality of life of people around, regular ongoing commercial usage could damage and change the character of the open green spaces themselves. It's an option - but there could be others, and surely all should be the subject of public debate. *But you can't have debate unless people declare an interest. For a start, everyone living near an open green space could sign up as its Friend - simply to register their basic interest in it, their concern for its future use - and their desire to be part of any consultation process. Community involvement doesn't have to mean weeding, or doing the Council's job for them - It can just mean thinking about the spaces we love, defining how we feel they should adapt to changing times, and speaking out to protect them. You can't have too many Friends!!*

Sometimes, maintenance of traditional Parks has been a struggle for years with no questioning whether their design might have been adapted in any way to people's changing needs. Victorian concepts die hard without Victorian Park keepers and Victorian class values. Showy massed bedding displays may be impressive and colourful, but they are not very green! Thousands of plants, raised in heat, often imported, then Contract planting, then weeding, then frequent watering... it costs thousands, even for a small roundabout. Can the planet, let alone the local budget, sustain these much longer?

There are a lot of exciting 21st century concepts now. Many brilliant landscape designers in this country are producing wonderful public open spaces, inspired to meet the utterly different needs of our society today: more relevant to modern living, easier on our budgets and on our environment. It would be good to have open discussion on these things, but first many more people need to take a positive interest, before money and environmental issues (and perhaps political dissent) deprive us of any choice.

Friends of Crescent Garden have surely demonstrated that the interest and encouragement of the community really can help to define a way forward, work constructively with the Local Authority - and work wonders besides.

Wendy Osborne, Friend's Curator

A last note. You will be sorry to hear that our faithful Trainee, Christine Gwynne, is in Hospital in Southampton. I know you will join us in wishing her a speedy and complete recovery. Christine is much missed by the Volunteers!!

The Friends' Garden Party, Party – Saturday 20th June 6-8pm

Gill Comrie has very kindly agreed to sell the tickets again this year, between Wednesday 13th May and Saturday 13th June. **Gill will have 300 tickets to sell to Friends.**

Prices: £8 Adults, children (Only those attending with their parents) £3.50 for 14 and under, £1 for 6 and under, prices are the same as last year.

Tickets can be obtained only from Gill Comrie (same as last year) only cheques please. Gill's 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.

As always, each household may invite two adults as guests. Should they wish for more, they can identify other Friends who aren't bringing any, or can't come - and have their quota; Gill may be able to help with this. 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 to accommodate the size/shape of the ticket first introduced last year), not everyone did this last year which caused Gill problems. 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.

On these tickets will be a sticker reminding Friend's that parents are responsible for the safety of their children during their time at the Garden Party.

Last year, about 40 children came, and many of them had a lively party of their own at the West end of the Garden. A lot of sharp-ended plant supports came in handy as swords, etc., and there was some satisfactory skirmishing, chasing and climbing. All good stuff, and no problem putting a few supports back in next day, but it's been pointed out to us that if some child had lost an eye in all the excitement there would have justifiably been a few sharp enquiries about whether there had been any adult supervision.

The Friends' Party organisers feel they can't take this on! These days, we'd need qualified child-minders - possibly several, to satisfy H and S regulations. After a lot of thought, it's been decided the best safeguard for everyone is that Friends can bring any number of their own

children as their guest allowance. As accompanying parents, they will naturally have responsibility for them. If they would like to ask grown-up guests as well, they can proceed as outlined above.

It was wonderful last year to see so many younger families at the Party, and to feel that the whole neighbourhood really enjoyed getting together in the Garden. The organising Committee would particularly welcome any input, suggestions or help from them, either before or after the Party.

Two years ago, we suggested that the neighbourhood children could have a party of their own, like the one for the Chernobyl Children, and invited any interested parents to meet up. There was considerable interest in the idea, but it never got off the ground. Perhaps in 2010??
(For the record, the Chernobyl children are accompanied by their Teacher/interpreter, and many of their host families come with them.)

Thank you for your co-operation.

Monday 25th May Bank Holiday Plant Sale. 10-12am

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 25th 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 repeat last years handsome donation to the National Gardens Scheme Charities. These donations – together with our high maintenance standards, keep Crescent Garden in the Yellow Book.

