





FRIENDS OF CRESCENT GARDEN: A TWENTY- FIRST ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

This Special Edition of the Spring Newsletter records the founding of the Friends in 1992, and some of their ongoing activities and achievements in Crescent Garden.

Photographs illustrate changes, projects, and some of the many Volunteers past and present. Supported by the Friends, they have made the Garden what it is today.

There are contributions from those closely connected with the project, and from Gosport's Mayor and MP – and some candid comments from Volunteers!

All the usual Newsletter information is here – page numbers below.

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*“Twenty-one years ago a few decidedly nervous people put up a lot of small posters inviting all and sundry to come to a Meeting in the Parish Centre, to consider becoming a **Friend of Crescent Garden**. Apart from a few twiggy roses round the centre and badly neglected turf, much of it was a thorny, overgrown and intimidating wilderness that stretched 200 yards along the whole site. Not much of a garden to be a Friend of, you might think.... bit of a nerve, really!” - A Founder Friend.*

‘A PIECE OF PARADISE REGAINED’

From Gilly Drummond OBE DL, President of Hampshire Gardens Trust:

My first sight of Crescent Garden was in 1989 when concern for potential development of the rear garden of one of the few surviving neo-classical crescents in Hampshire came to the attention of the Hampshire Gardens Trust. I was thrilled: what a beautiful place. The development did not occur, and the County Council, the Trust and the Borough Council turned our attention to the small public garden in front of this important building, beginning, as always, with the research. This formed the basis for what became an evolving master plan. It was then typical of a small public garden, low maintenance, mown grass, no railings, no flowers, a few trees but these did include a glorious tulip tree from the original planting.

Gardens are dynamic; they can adapt to new but appropriate new uses but none of us foresaw bouncy castles and the exemplary partnership between local people and Gosport Borough Council. This is a model for other small public gardens and a vital one now that public funds for maintenance of our green spaces are so short.

There were nettles to be grasped. 90% of us hate change and there were concerns. But, with creative flair and hard work, the rapidly developing support of local people began - and has continued as one of the most rewarding and delightful garden projects I have been involved with.

The core layout would be recognised by Jane Austen’s sailor brother Charles, and his description in 1829 of ‘A neighbourhood where so much good and generous feeling exists’ is as true today.

People generous with their time and skills make and sustain a garden. Today, it is truly beautiful, full of flowers and a delight and haven for all. Crescent Garden wins many accolades but we must thank all the garden’s Friends for this small piece of Paradise; it is they who wear them in their hearts.

‘ALVERSTOKE CRESCENT GARDEN - AND THE NGS.’

From Patricia Elkington, County Organiser of the National Gardens Scheme:

When I first saw Crescent Garden I was struck by the amazing transformation, from dereliction to an oasis of calm.

It was unique in the NGS, to have such a body of volunteer helpers working in a public place, and it was a credit to the far-sightedness of Gosport Borough Council that they gave them such support.

Botanically it was fascinating, with your mature Tulip tree and a Monkey Puzzle, and the authenticity of plants available at the time of the building of the Crescent was painstakingly researched. However - would this initial restoration work be continued - or would the Garden gently deteriorate over the years?

The improvement has not only been maintained, but steadily continued, thanks to the sustained efforts of the Friends and their Curators.

This is a shining example of what can be achieved through enthusiasm and hard work -and an example to others of what can be achieved with public spaces.

The National Garden Scheme is very grateful for all your efforts in maintaining the high standard over so many years, and for the money you have contributed to the Charities. We send all good wishes for continuing success!

FROM CAROLINE DINENAGE, MP FOR GOSPORT

"It gives me great pleasure to congratulate the Friends of Crescent Garden on their 21st anniversary!

Crescent Garden is one of Gosport's gems; not only a delightful spot of beauty and tranquility, but also a vibrant part of the local community, engaging local people in so many different ways.

The fact that this small garden has attracted so many awards and nationwide recognition is a proud testament to the love and care that so many of its Friends have invested over the years.

On behalf of the Gosport Constituency may I thank you, for your very special contribution to our area. And here's to the next 21 years!"

FROM THE MAYOR OF GOSPORT CLLR. RICHARD DICKSON

Crescent Garden is one of the biggest and brightest jewels in Gosport's crown..

If it wasn't for the Friends having a shared interest in keeping the Garden in perfect order it would not exist. But it doesn't simply exist - it goes from strength to strength, as recently demonstrated by the RHS award of a very rare Certificate of Special Distinction.

Gosport is proud of Crescent Garden, and proud of its Friends. You provide a wonderful facility enjoyed by young and old - and Gosport Borough Council has been proud to support you in all your efforts over so many years."



DEN, ALVERSTOKE. PROPOSED PLANTING
RUBBERY.



FROM MARK HASKEY *Dip.Hort (Edin). MA. MI Hort.*

My experience in a one acre oasis - I first saw Alverstoke Crescent Garden following an invitation from Mrs Wendy Osborne, whom I met at the 1995 Hampshire Gardens Trust AGM. I thought I was to see a domestic garden but found a small but unique and valuable open space being researched, designed and tended by very keen volunteers. These amazing people were so into what they were doing that I developed a real admiration and respect for what they did. I have been both on the payroll and as a volunteer for the cause, and always enjoyed being in the garden, working with fellow gardeners of all ages and backgrounds.

The special thing about gardening is to enjoy learning something new. When I and other volunteers installed the two Repton baskets we ended up trying two different approaches.

A circular trench was dug out for the first one, and we timed the work because the confines of the trench slowed down the task the deeper you dug. So, we had a cup of tea (from a very kind gentleman, himself used to working in small confined metallic spaces) - and we embarked on method two! We simply dug out the whole bed, and even though this meant excavating much more soil we smashed the previous record by over thirty minutes.

When the box hedge was planted, a porous pipe was laid all along the surface and this was then covered by a porous membrane before a layer of shingle hid all from sight. The way that the volunteers all did their parts of the process, in torrents of rain, was a spectacle in itself. (*contd. P 7*)

Pictures from L to R: - **1st**. The blank canvas, after County contractors finished the initial hard landscaping reclamation. The gravelled 'footprint' of the Reading Room, demolished in 1951, remains - but the only splash of colour is the dog waste bin.

2nd - part of a 1992 drawing of W Osborne's design for the central area envisaging the proposed planting as it matured. Based on research, this plan was approved by both HGT and the GHS (seen visiting on p 6.)

3rd 1993 - the flowing curves have been marked and cut, and the first Old Roses are being planted by a small group of early Friends.

4th 2005: the plan realised! Together with a central dolphin fountain, itself a major 3-year project for the Friends, involving many generous donations and Grants.

The last two pictures show the Reptonian flower baskets being installed, as described by Mark above. Just behind youngest Volunteer George Cook you can see a bit of the basket, waiting to be set permanently into its concrete ring.

Lastly - a view of the basket spilling over with old Roses, 2 or 3 years later.



Contd. From p 5. Many kind smiling faces came and said hello at numerous garden parties that I and the wife attended over the years and I won't lie, it was fabulous to hear the compliments about the garden, just being part of it - you know what I mean, what a fantastic legacy to leave to the next generation.

Volunteers are special people, who do special things, last year's Olympics are testament to that. So 21 years of hard work is justifiably put on record in a special newsletter! Green flags, numerous other awards and Yellow Book inclusions must not be forgotten, and I applaud the training given in partnership with the Women's Farm and Garden Association, which the Gosport Council kindly helps to fund. It can really help somebody starting out.

Crescent Garden is a very special place for me. It inspired me to study Garden History at Bristol University. (I graduated with an MA in 2009, after a lot of help, guidance and encouragement from the lady who first invited me to see it and meet the Friends.) I truly believe Alverstoke is the best Regency garden in the Country, eclipsing the Brighton Pavilion and George Staunton Country Park.

What will the next decade bring? I hope more able and industrious volunteers will cheerfully continue the good work, with their excellent Curator, Gilly Jaynes. Thanks to them all - and well done!

Pictures, from R to L, Some of the 'very special people' Mark described.

Top L: 3 early Friends have just concreted in the first little bench, 'Morrice's seat'.

A year later when a couple was sitting there it was the scene of a Proposal. The lady was startled when her boyfriend jumped up, went down on one knee, and popped the question. She sat transfixed: then flung her arms round him and shouted 'YES!!'

Top R: John Hervey, Chairman for the first decade, surrounded by a team of local children. Friends gave the 'Garden Guardians' a party with a Bouncy Castle, and the Mayor of Gosport invited them all to tea in the Mayor's Parlour.

Middle: 1995; Hampshire Gardens' Trust Chairman Gilly Drummond leads an inspection of the Crescent Garden project. Soon followed by a visit from the Garden History Society, **middle R.** Though faded, the picture's interesting. The lady with the bag is GHS Chairman Mrs Mavis Batey MBE. (Her pivotal wartime involvement with Bletchley Park was later to be portrayed in the film 'Enigma' by Kate Winslet). The tall girl in black is Cassandra Knight, descendant of Jane Austen's brother Charles. He lived at 2 Crescent Road, and knew Crescent Garden well.

Bottom L, 1997 Volunteers; 2nd seated from L is the retired hairdresser who first trimmed and shaped our box hedge.

A 2006 team, doing Autumn chores. There are some newer faces. The first Curator, (scruffy, with a rake) is hoping that the 3rd Volunteer from the right will become the next one. (Happily she did!) On the left, our Secretary; next to him is the Friends' second Trainee gardener. The tall man in the middle makes everyone great Coffee.

"WHY DO THEY DO IT?"

'At the 21st Anniversary watershed this is a question floating around...

As an alien from Stubbington I couldn't quite remember why; but realized that as a Jane Austen reader I had entered a contemporary setting that Jane would have felt at home in.

It became apparent that my efforts endangered plants and shrubs. I was guided to Compost Corner where I could operate at my own level. From there I was allowed to emerge for Julian's mug of coffee, a reward on any day, particularly when cold or wet. There is a flourishing pride in the cultivated results and everyone's work has created an *esprit de corps* which it is a pleasure to support.' ... David P: '*Stubbington Man*'

"Fresh air and good company, investing in something historical and lovely for everyone in the future".... Lesley

'Great coffee (sometimes BISCUITS!!) Seriously, though, it's great fun." Ginny

"Love the plants, and feel I'm learning more about them; enjoy the Period feel of the Garden - and the friendship." Annie

"When we came to look at no.12 Crescent Rd. thinking we might buy it, we strolled in the garden across the road. There, we were accosted by an enthusiastic lady who told us all about the garden. So we really became Friends of Crescent Garden before we ever bought our house!" Rita and Bill

"The Garden is so peaceful and there's such a feeling of friendship, all of us working here to keep it beautiful"....Sylvia

"Gardening – friendship – what more could you want?" Cynthia

"Working alongside friends in a lovely garden truly lifts the spirits"....Sarah

"I really enjoy working with such caring and friendly people".... Lin

" As Friends' Secretary and Volunteer, the Garden has completely transformed my social life!"...David M.

"Champagne in the bushes! We launched those new Compost bins in style, I'll never forget it...!!" Pam D.

'Wednesdays are a highlight of the week..' Wendy

"It's been a wonderful experience, to work with amazingly enthusiastic and dedicated people, in a garden with such a historic pedigree. I'm grateful for the opportunity I've had and have learnt so much in the process." Gilly, Curator.

A SPRING OUTING – from Enid Billington

Why not join us for a day trip to Wiltshire, on Tuesday 21st May?

A gentle 2 ½ hour drive will take us to Corsham, a small market town and the home of Corsham Court, the private house and grounds of Lord Methuen.

The original house dates back to the 10th century but over the years it has been reconstructed by noted architects Capability Brown, Nash and Bellamy. Today it stands amid 17 acres of formal gardens, and 18 acres of a young arboretum.

Paul Methuen was a noted diplomat in the 18th century who collected many great works of art now in the picture gallery at Corsham Court. Formal gardens, mainly herbaceous, bordered with box, are backed by walls covered with climbing plants.

Borders are replanted frequently to provide all round seasonal colour.

Peacocks wander about the grounds, often displaying their superb plumage.

Lacock NT village is traffic-free, enabling people to wander freely around the delightful 16th cent streets and cottages. The Fox Talbot photographic museum and Abbey are major features in the village and can be visited independently by members paying on arrival at the door. (NT members free). There are numerous places to eat - pubs, restaurant, and tea shops.

No drinks are available at Corsham Court: we suggest you either buy coffee/tea on board or bring your own. We plan to arrive at Lacock village by 1.30pm, giving time to find refreshments or have your picnic, and to walk around the village.

A 34-seater coach has been reserved - early booking essential! An application form will be enclosed with this newsletter.

Dep. Parish Centre at 8am: Arr. 10.30am Corsham Court for conducted tour and time at leisure in the gardens.

Depart 1pm for Lacock arriving at Lacock 1.15-ish Free time for lunch and sightseeing: Dep 5pm to be back by about 7-305pm Depart for Alverstoke, arriving at 7.30pm ish. Cost - coach travel and entrance to Corsham Court £24.50

AUTUMN OUTING. Planned by Rita Rundle

An exciting September Expedition, to darkest Staffordshire, to discover FOUR totally different, wonderful gardens, normally far beyond our reach.

Rita's research and planning, with detailed information and booking forms, are on separate sheets included with this Newsletter.

This special trip is actually a mini-break; and one not to be missed by anyone who enjoys spectacular gardens. Biddulph Grange garden alone is a world tour: China... Ancient Egypt... a Scottish Glen... Italian terraces... Sphinxes - and a bloody chamber, in which lurks The Ape of Thoth!! Who could resist?

GARDEN THOUGHTS - past, present, and future.... *Curator Gilly Jaynes*

I clearly remember Crescent Garden when it was a wasteland because I walked past it every day, when I took my girls to school. Over the years I have watched it gradually evolve into the magnificent place it has become today.

Once I retired I became a Volunteer myself, and have looked forward to Wednesday mornings, rain or shine, for over 6 years now.

Many things have happened during the past 21 years. Some years ago Crescent Garden was entered into the S and S/E in Bloom competition. With a little extra work from our dedicated Volunteers several awards were won, including two prestigious Regional Park of the Year Trophies.

Then it was announced there was to be another category: 'It's Your Neighbourhood'. Being neighbourly was something we knew a lot about. After all, the Friends' organisation is all about being inclusive, helping to provide a beautiful garden where everyone feels welcome.

We decided to enter that category, and to our amazement we received an Outstanding Award at our very first attempt - and at our second, third - and so on!

Last year, the Borough took part for the first time in the RHS National Britain in Bloom competition. This time, Crescent Garden received an outstanding 96% in 'It's Your Neighbourhood', and was awarded a National Certificate of Distinction: one of only 6 awarded. You can see a pattern emerging here, I'm sure.

This year, we thought we'd like to enjoy our Birthday celebrations free from last minute deadline worries multiplied by bad weather, worn-down lawns, and all the hectic tidying up for Judgment Days. And so the decision has been taken to step back from the competition route and - as some one was heard to remark recently - 'Let another garden win the prizes!'

So, in 2013 we'll take stock; we'll continue to plant the Diamond Jubilee Garden, there will be new trees to replace old ones - and some of the original Roses need some extra care and attention. You can see there is plenty of work to keep us all very busy for the rest of this year, and for many more to come.

From L to R: Autumn leaves make precious compost. Winter tasks tend to be heavy: tons of topsoil, crane-lifted over the railings, are quickly barrowed and spread. Pimms on Parade - a beaming Friend welcomes guests to the 2011 June Garden Party. Under the great Cedar, patrons of one of the Friends' May Plant Sales enjoy tea and cakes. Plant sales contribute to the National Gardens Scheme; teas benefit the Friends. Judgment Day! The Curator awaits the National Judges from the RHS for 2012 Britain in Bloom, alongside a display showing some of the Garden's wildlife. Chairman Pam last month, with Wednesday Volunteers - and Annie!



FROM THE CHAIRMAN, Pam Mawby.

Crescent Garden is a magical place, with beautiful planting and majestic trees. The sunshine and the shadows create the most wonderful, peaceful atmosphere. Just the place to sit for a while, and think...

I spent a little while looking at some old photographs of the garden, which showed how it was 21 years ago. The miraculous transformation brought about by many happy volunteers over the years is an impressive testament to their hard work and dedication. Some of these old photographs are published in this issue of the Friends Newsletter; I hope you are as impressed and proud of the transformation as I am. I feel very lucky to be Chairman of the Friends of Crescent Garden in such a significant year and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on the 16th June at our Garden Party, to celebrate our 21st Anniversary in style. Surely we must have better weather for it this year - but if not, bring your wellies!

*The pictures, R to L 1st shows the **sweep of railings**, planted with thousands of Narcissi. Bad idea! You learn by experience. Weeds proliferated, the long leaves turned yellow then withered, and mowing was tricky against the curved wall.*

2nd picture shows the reward of a lot of planning, investment, hard work - and the careful planting described by Mark Haskey, who worked with 17 Volunteers in a non-stop deluge one memorable w/e. It insulates the Garden from the increasing traffic on Crescent Rd, its protective arms giving it serenity. The first Volunteer to train and trim it was a retired hairdresser; the second is Bill Rundle, a scientist. Unsurprisingly, this immaculate box hedge has become one of the Garden's chief landscape assets. (Note: Bill welcomes trainee clippers who might enjoy helping to keep it in trim.)

3rd and 4th With help from partners GBC, the Friends installed a welcoming Information Board at the west central gate, in about 1994. There have been two larger Interpretation Boards, with text and illustrations provided by the Friends; this shows the more recent replacement, with a map identifying trees and an illustrated account of the Garden's history.

*The last two pictures show **Stubbington Man** in his habitat, with one of his major contributions to Crescent Garden: the Champagne-launched Compost Bins. On page 8, Dave Palmer gives the impression he's only let out for good behaviour and the Coffee break. In fact he almost singlehandedly installed Everedge around curving beds the entire length of the Garden, making their maintenance much easier. Curator Gilly names him **Volunteer of the Year!!***

Website www.angleseyville.co.uk

FROM THE SECRETARY

DATES FOR DIARIES

The Plant Sale Saturday 18th May 10am – 4pm

Friends Spring Visit * Tuesday 21st May

Chernobyl Children's Party Monday 10th June 2pm – 4pm

The Friends' Garden Party* Saturday 15th June from 6pm - 8pm

Friend's Autumn Visit * Sunday 1st – Wednesday 4th September

The Next AGM Saturday 1st March 2014, the Parish Centre at 2.30.

* Booking Forms for the three events are included with this Newsletter. If you didn't receive one, please contact the Secretary.

The Friends' 2013 Annual General Meeting.

A successful meeting at the Parish Centre was attended by over 100 Friends.

Minutes of this meeting will be circulated shortly before the next AGM, as it is felt the changed timing will make matters fresher in everyone's memory and facilitate general discussion of any 'matters arising'.

Copies of the Accounts were inadvertently not as widely distributed as usual at the Meeting; our apologies! Any member who would like a copy at any time, please apply to the Secretary.

Renewing Membership Subscriptions

Subscriptions run from the February AGM, and about 30% were paid then.

If you weren't able to come, please let Treasurer David Wardle have them (cheques to "Friends of Crescent Garden") at 2 St Mary's Ave. Gosport PO12 3PY.

Queries about membership, new members and those wishing to find out if their subscriptions are out of date should contact the Membership Secretary.

Her address is Mrs V Whelan, 1 Pembroke Crescent, Hill Head, Fareham, Hants, PO14 3PP. T. 01329 661849 or, email gedandginny@fridaywhelan.plus.com

The Plant Sale, Saturday 18th May 10-4pm May

Garden lovers shouldn't miss this annual horticultural bargain hunt!

Please could you help us sell plants? It would be a great help, as it's a popular event, and the first hour is always very busy.

Please ring Rita on 02392 587311 if you might be available.

Bring as well as buy, if you can - but please label your plants - buyers and sellers may not have met them before!

Have plants - but can't deliver on the 18 May? If you let Rita Rundle know in advance what plants you have in mind to bring she will arrange a temporary shelter for them.

Last year many Friends provided a wide mixture of interesting plants, and it would be excellent if we could repeat the handsome donation we raised for the National Gardens Scheme Charities. Their County Organiser has written a grateful acknowledgement to mark the Friends' 21st Anniversary at the start of this special Newsletter. (Our annual donations, together with our essential high standard of maintenance, keep Crescent Garden featured in the famous Yellow Book, attracting visitors from nationwide to see it.)

The Friends' Special 21st Birthday Garden Party - Saturday 15th June 6-8pm

Gill Comrie has very kindly agreed to sell tickets again for us, from 10 Anglesey Arms Road, Gosport, Hants, PO12 2DT. Tel.02392-588316.

Ticket availability: from 11th May to 8th June. Please mark envelopes GP. You can apply earlier, but tickets won't be despatched before 11th May.

Ticket prices : Adults (18 & over) £10

Aged 6 – 17yrs £5 } Children's names on reverse of parents'

Aged 5yrs and under free} and guardians' tickets.

Friends are reminded that parents/guardians are responsible for the safety of their children during the Garden Party and should be aware of their whereabouts and activities. Last year a number of children were playing in Crescent Road!

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 use their quota.

Members wanting tickets are requested to complete the application form enclosed separately with this Newsletter, and post or deliver it to Gill with payment, enclosing a stamped address envelope.

Cheques only please, made payable to "Friends of Crescent Garden". (If no SAE is provided, tickets will be made available for collection at the entrance gate on the evening of the Garden Party).

Gill is happy to accept outstanding annual subscriptions (£4 per person) for 2013-2014. Please forward a separate cheque (payable to "Friends of Crescent Garden") or cash. If you aren't sure if you're up to date with subs, you can check with Gill.

To avoid disappointment - please obtain your tickets early on!!!

Garden Tools for our volunteer gardeners

If you have a shovel you no longer need in good condition please contact David Palmer on 01329 665445, and he will collect. Other unwanted tools may help us, too. Thank you!

Do remember that we value your views and suggestions on both the Garden and the Friends' activities. Contact Pam Mawby at roger.mawby@btinternet.com or Curator Gilly Jaynes -gillyis@hotmail.co.uk - or the Secretary – tel. 02392 582068 or davidmerritt1@virginmedia.com

With best wishes to you all,

Your Hon. Secretary

David Merritt

Spring Cover 2013 and other photographs : Wendy Osborne.

(A quick PS here: many people will recognise themselves in these early pictures. Most are unnamed, and I apologise that space didn't permit lists of names. YOU know who you are - and hopefully will take pleasure in the thought that without you, and others like you, Crescent Garden wouldn't be the lovely place it is. Wendy)

