

# Friends of Crescent Garden

# AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2014

## *Message from the Chairman*

For once we were blessed with a warm and sunny June evening for the Garden Party! The garden, as always, looked beautiful. The band played and the Pimms flowed - it was a magical evening. The talk given by Roy Lancaster in August was very interesting and really well supported, as were both outings to Charleston and Monk's House in Sussex, and Mapperton House and Gardens in Dorset. We are now looking forward to the Winter Fair at the Parish Centre on 29th November which will be a really good opportunity for you all to buy delightful plants and gifts for Christmas.

*Pam Mawby*



*Friends enjoying the garden party in June*

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### **Saturday 29th November 2014**

#### ***Friends' Winter Fair***

St. Mary's Parish Centre, Green Road, Alverstoke  
From 10.30am to 12.30pm

All are very welcome.

We hope to offer the usual array of irresistible delights including bric-a-brac, thrilling books, homemade cakes, jams, chutneys, marmalade and Christmas goodies. There will be a bottle stall and some decidedly delectable raffle prizes!

*£1 admission – includes free coffee, biscuits and excellent company – don't miss it !!!*

### **Friday 12th to Sunday 14th December 2014**

#### ***Christmas Tree Festival***

St Mary's Church, Alverstoke  
Doors open from 11am to 6pm

### **Saturday 28th February 2015**

#### ***Friends of Crescent Garden AGM***

St Mary's Parish Centre, Green Road, Alverstoke at 2.30pm

### **Wednesday 18th March 2015**

#### ***The Life & Work of the Artist W.L. Wyllie RA***

An illustrated talk by Richard Martin

St Mary's Parish Centre, Green Road, Alverstoke

*Further ticket details will be announced.*

### **Saturday 30th May 2015**

#### ***The Friends Annual Plant Sale***

Crescent Garden, 10am to 4pm

### **Saturday 20th June 2015**

#### ***The Friends Annual Garden Party***

Any queries please contact David Merritt on 023 9258 2068

# GARDENER'S REPORT

Since our last report the Green Team have continued to turn up in large numbers on Wednesdays to maintain the garden. A huge thank you to them all and a warm welcome to our two new members Janice Harris and Evelyn Ransley.

The wet winter and early spring was followed by a very dry and sunny late spring and summer. The roses responded very well to both the weather and their spring pruning and have been quite beautiful. The Stanwell Perpetual along



*Volunteers at Stourhead with head gardener Alan Power*

the railings flowered from mid-May and the scent, mixed with the under planting of pinks in June, was fabulous.

In May there were two main events - the NGS plant sale and the Green Flag Award judging. Volunteers gardened on extra days to really make things as perfect as possible. Annie Sayle, Pam Mawby and Caroline Smith showed the judges around and I am delighted to report that the garden has passed with a score of 80+! I particularly like their suggestion of having a plant of the month posted on the notice board. I may not manage one a month, but I would be happy to make an attempt.

The NGS plant sale also went extremely well with visitors from as far away as Southampton and Guildford. The garden was in excellent condition and was much admired by those who came. At about 4 o'clock we ran out of cakes - even though I had made an emergency Betty Crocker mix and Sarah Cooke sacrificed two extra lemon drizzle cakes she had made for her own visitors that day!

Gardening has continued with cutting back and pruning shrubs after they have flowered, and we have trimmed the now well established hedge on terrace walk. Sometimes we think of these jobs as being mundane and boring, especially the cutting back of the dreaded bay shoots. Often the visitor will see very little change in the garden as they stroll around, and we sometimes question if our efforts are really having any effect on the appearance of the garden. Our visit to Stourhead House and our meeting with the Head Gardener, Alan Power, helped to allay these thoughts. Alan's philosophy is quite simple. He believes that by maintaining an historic garden, we become conservationists. We spent an inspiring hour or so walking around Stourhead with him and discussing gardening issues. It was so good to hear that he too has problems sourcing plants in appropriate date, that the hundreds of bulbs that they planted in good faith as white tulips turned out to be bright red! As gardeners we share the same problems, and his attitude to "the wrong plant" issue is to make a note, archive the information and make a plan to put it right. This is done in a careful and controlled manner, taking into account budget, time and also the audience. After all visitors to a garden like Stourhead expect to see some sort of display, not empty beds because of a supplier failure. We were flattered by Alan's genuine interest in what we all did in Crescent Garden, and that he showed a real desire to pay us a visit - a return match so to speak. Thank you to David Cooke for organising the visit.

This year we have really benefitted from having a great WRAGS trainee, Sandee. Sadly her training came to an end and we have been slightly in limbo, waiting for news of a replacement. If anybody would like to take on this position, or if you know of anyone who would be interested, please talk to Lesley Flett 023 9261 3907 or Annie Sayle 023 9258 2028.

The trees have all been assessed by Dave Stubington, the council's Tree and Landscape Officer. I have raised my concern about the Cupressus sempervirens with Caroline Smith, the Parks and Landscape Contracts Officer, at our last monthly get together, and also the need for the reduction of the height of the bay trees along Terrace Walk.

The most rewarding thing about working in the garden on Wednesdays is meeting the visitors to the garden. People are so grateful for all the hard work we do and are so appreciative - in return we try to recruit them as new Friends. The maintenance continues and with it the conservation of Crescent Garden.

*Lesley Flett,*

## GARDEN VOLUNTEERS

### *We Need Wednesday Morning Volunteers!*

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 1. They train you up, your head gardeners<br>They probably mean to, and they do<br>They fill you with their skills of years<br>And add some extra, just for you | 2. But they were trained up in their turn<br>By gardeners writing books<br>Who half time helped them learn<br>And half showed how to look | 3. Man hands on skills to man<br>It deepens like a coastal shelf<br>Get out as early as you can<br>And learn some skills yourself |
|---|---|---|

The contribution of "This be the verse" by Philip Larkin is humbly acknowledged.

*Bill Rundle*

# GARDEN CUTTINGS

## Tulipomania

Perhaps no other flower heralds the arrival of spring like the tulip – indeed those that populate the beds in Crescent Garden are keenly anticipated. However, one wonders how many admirers of this staple of the English garden are aware of the reckless mania that accompanied the introduction of the tulip to Holland over 400 years ago. In the late 16th century botanist Carolus Clusius brought tulips from Constantinople and planted them in a small garden for purposes of medicinal research. Apparently he refused to give - or sell - any to the locals and some of his neighbours, looking to make a fast guilden on the exotic new flower from Turkey and disappointed with Clusius's lack of capitalistic fervour, broke into his garden, stole some bulbs, and started the Dutch tulip trade. The tulip's genetic instability meant that it was an immensely variable plant which was one of the reasons for its attractiveness. The plant became sought after among amateurs and quickly passed into the nursery trade. Its propensity to "break", producing petals striped in different colours (which is caused by a virus rather than any genetic defect) was quickly noticed and an extraordinary market developed for great rarities. This tulipomania which gripped the Netherlands in the early 17th century needs to be set in the context which Simon Schama provides in his *The Embarrassment of Riches* (1987). Schama describes a society that had become so rich it began to run out of things on which to spend money – the great rarity, even uniqueness, of a tulip cultivar became infinitely alluring. There arose a frenzied speculation on tulip bulbs which, at the height of the bubble in 1636-7, changed hands many times at ever increasing prices, doubling or tripling by the week or day before their flowers had ever been seen. At the peak of the craze the most expensive cultivar, *Semper augustus*, a white flower with red flames, was sold for 10,000 florins – the equivalent of the amount a skilled artisan would earn in 24 years. The tulip market crashed in 1637 but tulips have remained popular throughout Europe to the present day and of course bring much welcome and vibrant colour to our own Crescent Garden.

*Richard Martin et al*



*The 'Green Team' celebrate the raising of our 10th green flag with the Mayor and Mayoress of Gosport.*

## THE MULBERRY TREE



*Maggie Christiansen's mulberry tree*

The mulberry tree was introduced to England by James VI of Scotland, after becoming King James I of England in 1603. Frustrated by Parliament's control of his finances he decided to generate his own wealth and took advantage of the silk industry which was flourishing at that time. He planted mulberry trees as the leaves are the staple diet of silkworms.

Unfortunately his plan misfired because he encouraged the black mulberry, which grew best in England, whereas the silk worm favoured the white mulberry!

No such mistake was made with the Crescent Garden's black mulberry tree, donated by Maggie Christiansen in 1994 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of D-Day and the Mulberry Harbours, which were assembled in Stokes Bay and were such an important part of the Allied invasion.

The fruit of this tree continues to help our finances as the berries are harvested and made into mulberry jelly by our volunteers, being popular at the various fund-raising events.

*Pam Dimmock*

# SPRING & AUTUMN VISITS

## Spring Visit

On 12th June, under a blue sky, the Friends travelled to Sussex and visited Charleston and Monk's House, the country retreats of members of the Bloomsbury set. At Charleston we enjoyed the rather avant-garde art of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant, as well as stories of their unconventional lifestyle. We then moved on to Monk's House where Virginia and Leonard Woolf spent their summers - a small and sparsely furnished country cottage with extensive and delightful gardens and grounds. It was a glorious day among like-minded people!



*Pam Mawby and Trish Kelly at Monk's House, Virginia Woolf's country retreat*

## Autumn Visit

Later in the year on 18th September we visited Mapperton House and Gardens in Dorset. The extensive garden is a delight and includes many unusual plants, plenty of topiary, a bog garden, and a wonderful array of mature trees including two tulip trees. The house, of a very pleasing honey-coloured stone, is still lived in by the family. Another delightful day full of charm and peace.

*Enid Billington*



*Friends being shown around Mapperton House and Gardens*



*Rita Rundle on Heritage Open Day showing members of the public around the garden. It was a very well supported and successful day.*



*In August Roy Lancaster gave a most enjoyable and very well attended lecture entitled "Special Plants for Special Places" at the Thorngate Hall.*

## JOIN THE FRIENDS!

For all membership enquiries contact Ginny Whelan at: [gedandginny@fridaywhelan.plus.com](mailto:gedandginny@fridaywhelan.plus.com)  
Any other enquiries please contact the Friends Secretary David Merritt on 023 9258 2068 or email: [davidmerritt1@virginmedia.com](mailto:davidmerritt1@virginmedia.com)

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

We are always looking for new volunteers – please come and join us. We are in the garden on Wednesday mornings from 9am until midday. Gardening skills not essential! If you have any spare time please contact Lesley Flett on 023 9261 3907 or Annie Sayle on 023 9258 2028 they would love to hear from you!