

Friends of Crescent Garden

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2016

Message from the Chairman

At last the long awaited shed is in the Garden and in full use, giving much needed storage space for tools that are now easily available for the gardeners. We have Dave Palmer to thank for overseeing the purchase, erection and fitting out of the shed, and are most grateful to him for the time and care he took with this project.

I am pleased to welcome two new members to the committee, James Sykes and Irene Buggle. I would like to thank them for volunteering and I hope they find their time on the committee fulfilling and enjoyable.

The Plant Sale is on June 4th this year, do please support the event that enables us to send a large donation to the National Gardens Scheme. As you know, all the plants are grown by our volunteers or kindly donated by the Friends. Thank you all for your generosity. Another date to put in your diary is the Garden Party on June 18th, and we are praying for a sunny evening already. I do hope as many of you as possible will be there to spend a splendid evening with Friends, enjoying Pimms with strawberries and cream, to the music of a delightful brass band.

Pamela Mawby



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 4th June 2016

Friends of Crescent Garden Annual Plant Sale

At Crescent Garden from 10am to 4pm

All are welcome, refreshments are available.

Please clearly label any plants that you bring along.

For any help delivering plants please contact

Rita Rundle on 023 9258 7311

Last year's event set a new record for money raised that allowed us to send a generous donation to the National Garden Scheme. The first hour is always busy and any offers of help would be" greatly appreciated!!

Friday 10th June 2016

Spring Visit

Trip to Stansted Park Garden Show, West Sussex.

Booking form enclosed.

Saturday 18th June 2016

Friends Garden Party

At Crescent Garden from 6 to 8pm.

Booking form enclosed

Thursday 22nd September 2016

Autumn Visit

Details to follow

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

What a convivial occasion we enjoyed at the AGM on Saturday 27th February, with ninety Friends in attendance as well as the Mayor and Mayoress and local councillors. Pam Mawby opened proceedings with a review of the garden over 2015, then our treasurer Trish Kelly informed us that we were in the pink rather than the red which is always welcome news!

Head Gardeners Lesley Flett and Annie Sayle then gave us a very informative and pictorial account of the garden and its plants – how Annie pronounced all of the botanical names I will never know! We were informed of the planting plans for the coming year, all carefully considered for a Regency garden. Lesley and Annie are delighted, as we all are, with the new shed which has been fitted out and organised by one of our Green Team members David Palmer.

No meeting would be complete without the delicious selection of sandwiches and cakes provided by Friends, not to mention tea and sparkling conversation.

Thanks as always must go to the Green Team who tend the garden with such dedication and love, ably directed by Lesley and Annie. Thank you also to the many others who assist behind the scenes throughout the year, and to you the members who continue to support the garden and help to make it the jewel of not only Alverstoke but Gosport too!

Enid Billington

www.alverstokecrescentgarden.co.uk

HEAD GARDENERS' REPORT

Spring 2015

We have made efforts over the last two years to extend the flowering season in the garden. Look out for our new spring flowering shrub *Edgeworthia chrysantha* and newly planted bulbs including bluebells, petticoat daffodils and snowdrops.

The early-flowering daphnes have given us a powerful fragrance in the Jubilee Garden, with colour provided by myrtle and *Iris reticulata* - flowering for the first time. We have been removing tulips that were developed after our cut-off date of 1850 and have been enhancing the range with the yellow woodland *Tulipa sylvestris*, the spidery *Tulipa acuminata* and others.

WRAGS (Work and Retrain as a Gardener Scheme) trainee Charles Ntumwa has joined us and has been working with the Green Team on Wednesdays. If anybody can suggest a partner garden for our next WRAGS trainee then please do get in touch with us.

Summer 2015

One of our targets for the summer was the renovation of the Repton rose baskets in which task we were assisted by Jonny Bass, Head Gardener at Mottisfont, who has suggested planting schemes and shared advice on rose care. We ordered date appropriate roses including *Rosa mundi*, *Rosa 'Charles de Mills'* and *Rosa 'Quatre Saisons'*, all underplanted with *Dianthus*.

The NGS (National Gardens Scheme) plant sale at the end of May was again a great success. Rita propagated and nurtured a huge number of plants and kept the selection refreshed throughout the day. Thank you to all those who donated plants and cakes, and to the many that visited from far and wide.

The roses in Crescent Garden were particularly splendid this summer and were at their best for the garden party in June. Sadly the weeping pear was lost following an attack of fire blight, an incurable disease only preventable by maintaining good plant health. Another specimen of the same tree will take its place. The *Buddleja globosa* (orange-ball tree) and myrtle were both glorious in the summer, being pruned back after flowering to maintain their shape and health.

In July we were pleased to welcome local WI members to the garden and it was a pleasure to spend time with such an appreciative and engaged group.

Autumn 2015

Autumn saw the planting of a further 150 bulbs of various varieties of tulips, narcissi and bluebells. We raked up wheelbarrows full of leaves which were taken to 'Compost Corner' to become volunteer Dave Palmer's fantastic homemade compost! We also cleared and renovated the main herbaceous bed opposite the fountain, in the process removing some old and rather woody lavender bushes. These will be replaced with new specimens.

We are grateful to Gosport Council who reduced the bay trees along Terrace Walk in October, and also removed two *Cupressus sempervirens* allowing more light to penetrate through to Terrace Walk and the adjacent beds. We are very mindful that these two evergreens were an integral part of Wendy Osborne's original design for the garden, but over time they had become rather unsightly. We will consider and take a view as to whether it is necessary to replace them, and with what.

Winter 2015

The gardens were once again awarded a Green Flag after an unannounced inspection. The award is a credit to all the Green Team members who keep the garden so well tended. A huge thank you to you all. We are always looking for further volunteers so do please get in touch if you would like to help us on Wednesdays, whether you are an experienced gardener or a novice. You may like to help us in other ways, we could make use of a good photographer or you could contribute an article for the newsletter.

The much-needed shed was finally installed in December and is now fully furnished with tools and equipment, the old construction being maintained to house the henchman and hose. The wet weather was a challenge with very muddy walkways and a temporary pond under the beech tree!

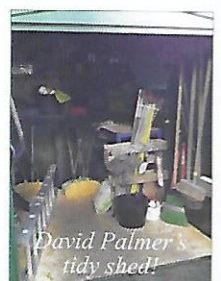
Going Forward

Our plans for 2016 include screening the compost area and shed, and adding more evergreen interest at the eastern end. We are also investigating the possibility of a 'leaky hose' irrigation system for the herbaceous borders. The Repton baskets will be renovated and we are planning to extend seasonal colour by planting late-flowering plants such as *Dahlia coccinea* (Red Dahlia). We continue to have an excellent relationship with Gosport Borough Council and meet regularly with Caroline Smith and Dave Stubington. Thank you both so much for your support and advice. In the forthcoming year the council have arranged to repaint the blue benches, renovate the grass which is rather bare under the beech tree, and erect a barrier around the black bamboo to prevent suckering.

We would like to ask all members to continue to help to recruit new Friends – the long term future of our garden depends on maintaining high membership numbers, bringing fresh vision and renewed energy.



Annie Sayle (2nd from right) showing a group around on Heritage Day in September



David Palmer's tidy shed!

GARDEN CUTTINGS

Lament to the Reading Room & Bath House

The year 1945 brought the end of World War II and the beginning of a twenty-year period lasting until the mid-1960s during which time much of Gosport's heritage was unceremoniously demolished, most of it for no good reason. Older Gosportians will remember many of the old buildings with affection. One such edifice was the reading room and bath house complex which once straddled the area where the main gate to the garden is today and was, of course, an integral and important feature of Cruickshank and



The Bath House in 1920

Owens' wonderful water spa known today as 'The Crescent', and built between 1827 and 1831. This fine and imposing neoclassical building, entered through an imposing four-pillared portico, actually comprised two bath houses, each with six baths, flanking a raised reading room with far reaching views across Stokes Bay. The original gardens were allowed to become overgrown and neglected over a period of about a hundred years and in 1949 Cruickshank's great-granddaughter gave them to Gosport, who promptly demolished the entire building the following year – **what vision!** The gardens were allowed to further deteriorate for forty years or so, until the formation of the Friends in 1991. Imagine how majestically this fine old building would have sat today within the painstakingly and beautifully recreated garden.

Richard Martin

GREEN FLAG DAY



The Green Team celebrate the raising of our 11th Green Flag award with the Mayor and Mayoress

GARDEN VOLUNTEERS

I wandered through the garden proud
That's set beside the Crescent fair,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of people digging there;
Beside the path, beneath the trees,
Chattering and working in the breeze.

The plants around them grew; and they
Encouraged them with helping hand.
The birds around them were at play.
Not frightened by this busy band:
I gazed – and gazed – but little thought
What wealth the sight to me had brought:

For now, when on a Wednesday morn
I rise alert and full of glee
I join the volunteers, re-born,
To sweep and plant and drink coffee:
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

Thank you, Mr. Wordsworth

Come any Wednesday morning and see if you, too, can add zest to your life by doing something in Crescent Garden

Rita and Bill Rundle

SPRING VISIT TO STANSTEAD PARK

Our visit to Stanstead Garden Show last year was so popular that we have decided to repeat the trip this year. For those who did not join us last year, we can promise you there is much to see including a wide selection of plants and quality garden accessories on sale. There will be lots of delicious food and drink on offer and the church flower festival is not to be missed! The house is also open to visitors if you would like to look around, though separate payment must be made at the entrance. We look forward to you joining us. We are visiting on Friday 10th June and will be departing Alverstoke Parish Centre at 9.15am, returning at 5pm traffic allowing. Priced at £21 including travel and entrance to the show. Application form enclosed.

Enid Billington

FRIENDS REMEMBERED

Whilst I was in the garden recently taking some photos for the newsletter I was joined by a group of people from the nearby autistic home. They were enjoying a sensory day among the early flowers and trees. The support worker in charge of the group said that they often visited the garden and how much they enjoyed touching, smelling and observing the ever changing garden through all the seasons.

We have recently received a lovely note from Roger Wools from York which read *'Thank you for all your hard work. My mother loved these gardens when staying for seven years at Brookfield Care Home'*.



Betty Whetstone

The Gardens bring pleasure and peace to so many.

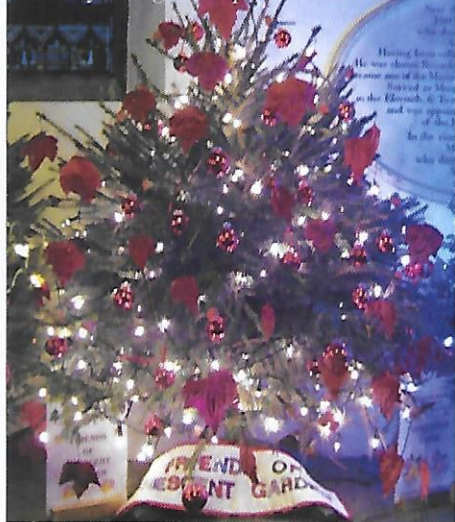
Sadly, after a long illness **Betty Whetstone** passed away at the beginning of January 2016 She had such a wonderful and positive outlook on life. Her devoted husband Tony reflected *'Betty was a member of the Friends of Crescent Garden from its foundation, and in her last years at Brookfield Residential Home still enjoyed regular visits to sit in the garden'*.

David Bone supported Crescent Gardens from its infancy and with his father was instrumental in organizing the electricity supply for the garden. When he later became confined to a wheelchair he loyally attended every event he could manage, always brave and cheerful under great hardship. He sadly passed away December 2015.

We shall miss them both.

Elaine Martin

The Crescent Garden Christmas Tree - decorated by Enid Billington and Pam Mawby using natural and paper leaves



A very festive table at the Friend's' Winter Fair

JOIN THE FRIENDS!

For all membership enquiries contact Ginny Whelan at: gedandginny@fridaywhelan.plus.com

Any other enquiries please contact the Friends Secretary David Merritt on 023 9258 2068

or email: davidmerritt1@virginmedia.com