

"ALVERSTOKE CRESCENT GARDEN"

Extracts From a Talk For The Garden History Society and The
Friends Of Brighton Pavilion Museum, June 20th 2004.

The Garden is small, 1.3 acres, and has been described by Mavis Batey in her essay in 1993 on "Loudon and the Regency Style", and in 1995 in her book, "Regency Gardens". Its earliest beginnings were as part of the new venture of Angleseyville, which began just as Nash's work on the Royal Pavilion was completed in the early 1820s. It was the project of Robert Cruickshank, an entrepreneur who envisaged a fashionable and prosperous resort.

He was an Attorney, a man of charm and address, with all the fizzing enthusiasm of Jane Austen's Mr Parker of Sanditon. The whole story of Cruickshank's aspirations - and the inherent flaw in his enterprise - are contained in a single exchange in the opening chapter of Jane Austen's last unfinished novel. Mr Parker's new acquaintance acknowledges that he has heard of Sanditon: "Every 5 years, one hears of some new place or other starting up by the sea, and growing the fashion. How half of them can be filled, is the wonder! *Where* people can be found, with money or time to go to them! Bad things for a country - sure to raise the price of provisions and make the poor good for nothing." "Not at all, Sir!" warmly replies Mr Parker. "It may apply to your large, overgrown places, like Brighton, or Worthing, or Eastbourne - but *not* to a small village like Sanditon, precluded by its size from experiencing any of the evils of civilization, while the growth of the place, the buildings, the nursery grounds, the demand for everything, and the sure resort of regular, steady, private families of thorough gentility and character... a blessing everywhere (who) excite the industry of the poor and diffuse comfort and improvement among them of every sort!" It need hardly be said that neither convinced the other.

Mr Cruickshank was probably very like Mr Parker, although he was undoubtedly more astute and ambitious - he had many schemes, and some political influence, and was adept at what is now known as PR. When the men of business in Gosport proposed to give him a service of plate, as a token of the town's gratitude, he let it be known that what he would *really* like was a Church - a select place of worship, conveniently near the Crescent, for families of thorough gentility enjoying a season by the sea.

When he planned a Crescent, it certainly was not the little one hoped for by Mr Parker and he went one better than that gentleman's plan to name his after Waterloo. Cruickshank enlisted no less than the Marquess of Anglesey, Wellington's dashing Cavalry Commander who lost his leg in the great battle, to be his Patron. Here was a hero with the pulling power of David Beckham and Douglas Bader combined, of august aristocracy and a fascinatingly irregular private life, to lay the first stone of Angleseyville. As we all know now, there's nothing like a Celebrity, and the Hampshire Telegraph of September 1825 records that ten thousand people came, on foot, on horseback or in carriages, to witness and celebrate this interesting event.

Among the thousands was Mr Nash, from East Cowes Castle. It would be fascinating to know what he thought of the plans drawn up by the 21 year old architect, Thomas Ellis Owen, for the new resort - certainly a sharp contrast to the Prince Regent's fantastical Palace. It is pleasant to

speculate on an approving glance from the great man at drawings for Owen's grand double Crescent in the Neo-Classic manner, with magnificent open views to the Isle of Wight over an Ornamental Garden.

Much later, Pevsner was to describe Owen's design as 'a piece of Georgian urban planning unsurpassed in Hampshire'. Laid out to front both halves of the Crescent, the Garden was the shape of an elongated, very shallow capital D. While storm-tossed ships in the Solent, racing clouds and wind-bent trees would have conformed admirably to the earlier 18th century ideal of the Picturesque, this small Ornamental Garden in the last years of the Regency would have represented, I believe, what Michael Symes describes as Repton's "rather cosier version a sort of Villa Picturesque, with flowery shrubberies and flower gardens near the house".

Thomas Ellis Owen certainly made the most of the site: the grazing land between the Crescent's Ornamental Garden and the sea gives his building the impressiveness of a large marine country seat in a picturesque landscaped park. Until quite recently it was generally believed that Robert Cruickshank's Angleseyville was never a real success. This is inaccurate. In 1831 the Anglesey Hotel so overflowed with visitors that its Proprietress put an advertisement in the local paper: "Mrs Young begs leave to announce to the Nobility, Gentry, her Friends and the Publick.... that in consequence of the great influx of visitors to this fashionable Watering Place the adjoining Private House has been added to the Hotel. Warm and Cold Seawater Baths, with an elegant Reading Room adjoining, are situate in a beautiful Promenade".

There were too some surprisingly distinguished residents. The Duke of Portland took Uxbridge House for a time, Countess Nelson lived in what is now Bramley House and Prince Ernest of Leiningen, Queen Victoria's nephew, became a neighbour. In the early 1830s there was a notable Naval resident at Number Two in Crescent Road: Captain Charles Austen, the younger of Jane Austen's two sailor brothers, with his family. His sister Cassandra visited him here. At a Banquet in Cruickshank's honour at the Anglesey Hotel he paid the community a charming compliment: "It is no small gratification to me", he said, "to leave those who are dear to me in a neighbourhood where so much good will and generous feeling exist"...

In the print, Captain and Mrs. Charles Austen are strolling down Terrace Walk; raised above a ha-ha it commands fine views of the Isle of Wight and shipping in the Solent. The small Neo-Classic curved Reading Room, flanked by the advertised Bath Houses, gave access to Terrace Walk. Sea water, supplied by a Pump House in nearby St Mark's Road, was drawn from Haslar Creek.

The Garden itself, a local paper reported, "Reflected infinite credit on the abilities of the Gardener, and honour on the liberality of the Founder." As well as adorning the double Crescent originally planned, it was a place where convalescents, the elderly and the very young could take exercise and the sea air while escaping the more bracing rigours of the pebbled seashore. Flowing beds facing the Southerly aspect as recorded, would be enjoyed from the overlooking windows, as well as in the Garden.

No planting plans have been discovered, and I suspect it is unlikely that there were any, since the overall design and landscaping was almost certainly done by the architect. The Garden's area was probably kept as small as its function would allow to limit outgoings on planting and maintenance as part of the overall business plan - and to take maximum advantage of the open landscape to the South. Flowers could be left to a capable gardener, just as Loudon left them

to the lady of the house. Trees were probably purchased from a Nursery, then situated just behind the Crescent, seen on a later map. Residents of Crescent Road paid key-money for their use of the Garden, which paid for the gardener.

In the print, the Crescent is as Thomas Ellis Owen designed it, with triangular pediments at each end. The figure on the right is Mr. Robert Cruickshank, pondering the shadowy outline of the other half of the Crescent, still hoped for at this time ... The garden is laid out to accommodate both, and the Tulip Tree, now old and magnificent, is newly planted in the foreground. The sea-ward view was all-important, so the ornamental shrubbery, with many evergreens - Hollies, Bay, Arbutus Unedo and Portuguese Laurel - made a wind-break never intended to grow too high, apart from the occasional Scots Pine. Considered the proper complement to Neo-Classical architecture, these trees with their tall naked trunks would eventually frame and enhance the view, rather than obscure it.

But I suspect investors suffered a gradual unease after the flourish and success of the first few seasons - a similar insecurity to that shown by the less sophisticated Mr Parker, with his constant strivings to attract visitors to Sanditon.

A map of 1857 shows the plot for the second half of the grand Crescent still vacant, although its foundations had been worked on, and the Garden curved in readiness before it. The initial success of Angleseyville did not continue long enough to give sufficient encouragement for it to be built: a great pity. There exists a plan of the Reading Room and Bath Houses, and the Garden's paths, seats and trees. Careful scrutiny shows a fountain in front of Mrs Young's Hotel.

As the fickle tide of fashion receded, the local investment paid less handsomely. The houses were sold off to more permanent, less affluent residents - perhaps Naval Officers on half pay, eagerly hoping for a ship in Portsmouth. Robert Cruickshank died in his 50s, probably worn out by overwork. He was buried, like many of his large family, in the graveyard of St Mark's, the Church given to him by grateful public subscription instead of the service of plate.

A general decline set in, and the vision of Angleseyville faded, absorbed into the growing village of Alverstoke, in turn enveloped by the town of Gosport.

A mid-Victorian view of the Crescent shows signs of genteel neglect. Retiring gentry on limited incomes, rather than dashing visitors and elegant newcomers, are the order of the day.

The Crescent's Garden was becoming a liability, with insufficient funding to maintain it. The original sum levied from residents was based on calculations that included a double Crescent, and it seems there was no way that these could be legally increased - even if the less affluent householders could afford it.

After WW I the fixed rent was dwarfed further by rising labour costs and by the 20s it was no longer collected. During WW II the iron railings were taken for munitions.

By 1949, the Garden had become a wilderness and a worry to Cruickshank's great granddaughter Pauline, and she handed over its control to the Borough Council. The Reading Room was still being used (for dancing classes and small neighbourhood gatherings) but protests were overridden, and the Council demolished it in 1950.

A picture of the Reading Room on the day it was pulled down is in the archive of the Royal Commission of Historic Monuments. It's sad it wasn't a sunnier day, to cheer these last pictures of a beautiful and very interesting small building. What it doesn't show is that this was home for

Henry and Mary Cooper. Henry is recorded there as Gardener in the 1840 Census, Mary as a labourer. They had a small basement flat, alongside the boilers, under the Reading Room.

The Local Authority designated the once Ornamental Garden an Open Space and it was minimally maintained as such for 40 years. In 1988 Hampshire Gardens Trust recommended its reclamation to Hampshire County Council as part of an Urban Re-generation scheme. As a result of the Trust's recommendation, there was a cooperative venture between HCC, Gosport Borough C, the Trust, and English Heritage. This effectively restored the railings, cleared and replanted a mixed hedge along the Southern boundary, where the remains of the ha-ha had filled with rubbish, and reinstated the original paths and gravelled them, together with the curving site of the Reading Room in the middle.

This took time, a great deal of money, and painstaking consultation with the community, which was dubious about change. Fort Road residents were also fiercely protective of their long-established rights of way through the Garden from their back gates. Because we had lived in the Crescent since 1960 the Trust's Chairman Gilly Drummond asked me if I would liaise between the various bodies concerned and the community. From this it was a short step to forming a group of Friends, and we agreed that we should try to restore the Garden to how it might have looked in the early years of the Crescent.

From then on, there were half a dozen essentials to pursue. We must have a properly researched vision, and the community's awareness, support, and active participation in achieving it. There would have to be a constructive and solid partnership with the Local Authority and their Contractors. There would be an enormous amount of horticultural and manual labour to be done - hopefully by enthusiastic volunteers. And, of course, there would be the need for ongoing funds, quite probably considerable. How considerable we never guessed.

Luckily all this only gradually became clear, or paralysis would have set in at once. It was probably extremely fortunate that we were all amateurs, blissfully ignorant of so much. We were very conscious of this ignorance when deciding to recreate the Garden as it might have been, but our efforts were given the kindest and most heartening encouragement by Mavis, then the Society's President. On receiving the first tentative Loudon-based plan for the central area, Mavis didn't simply write or phone - she was with us in no time, with an infectious enthusiasm that gave us confidence and a belief that all was possible. Avenues of research were irresistibly presented, interesting photocopies emerged from her carrier bag, and we were left with the feeling that here was sympathetic, accessible and infinitely knowledgeable support, which has sustained us over the last decade more than I can say.

Another feeling was that there was little point embarking on this enterprise unless it was a serious endeavour: we wanted to do it to the best of our ability. In 1993 we wrote to John Sales, at that time chief Gardens Adviser to the National Trust, for his advice on some of the planting. He wrote that attitudes to garden restoration were still at a formative stage, but he too was encouraging and helpful. I would like to quote these sentences from a lecture, later published in the Society's Journal, which sum up much of what he said, which was highly constructive:

"The primary justification for restoring gardens is that they should inform us accurately about the past - they should be interesting. The other main justification is that they should be enjoyed."

And:

"The best approach is a process of steady and gradual reappraisal and renewal, always anticipating future change - which comes from enlightened management and upkeep."

Progress has been slow, but this has given time to study the movement of people within the space, to familiarise ourselves with the characteristics of the soil, the existing planting, and to ponder, research and consult widely on any proposed additions. These too came slowly, but the neighbourhood had time not only to adjust to changes, but grew interested and financially supportive of each project in turn. The earlier radical changes imposed on it by the loss of the open landscape context and the later demolition of the central building clearly had major implications for what we hoped to achieve.

What did we hope for? I think our hopes evolved as our knowledge grew a little, but it was clear from the beginning that we could never restore the Garden to how it had been before these changes were imposed on it. What we have attempted is to absorb these two great losses in a way that might have been employed by gardeners of the time.

The central area - immediately christened the helipad - was the obvious place to begin. The design was devised from Loudon's design for a retrospectively picturesque garden in Hampstead in 1836, which covered a roughly similar area.

A sketch was developed from the ground plan in 1992. It appealed sufficiently to the neighbouring community to enlist their support - about 70 donated a Rose, from a list compiled by Hazel Le Rougetel, another source of expertise and unstinting encouragement. After we had transferred the plan to the site, Gosport Borough Council contractors dug out the beds - filled with masonry from the demolished Reading Room - and our first group of volunteers planted the donated Roses. A start had been made on all fronts.

We were not working in limbo, however, but in a Public garden, open night and day. We were soon to learn there would always be constant interruptions and distractions - some of them frustrating, some potentially very good news. The first one came just as the roses had been planted - a band of children from a nearby estate, who rode mountain bikes over the beds with happy shrieks. Restraint, explanations, and serious diplomatic negotiations involving reckless quantities of Humbugs and some custom-made badges, resulted in a small team of Garden Guardians. Although we had to explain there was no money it - we all worked for love - for a time we were all the rage, and numbers swelled to about 30.

They rode each other round in the wheelbarrows (which were never quite the same again), swept up leaves and jumped in them, rang our doorbell constantly to report fires, grievous bodily harm, a SNAKE!!! - a lovely Slow-worm, sunning on Terrace Walk - and of course, to show us their Birthday presents whenever anyone had a Birthday. While not very conducive to research, and tending to slow down the gardening, all this was highly beneficial. It reminded us that the Garden belonged just as much to the children as it did to anyone else - a fact we pointed out to them - and it left us all with happy memories. I suspect theirs mainly featured Humbugs, the Bouncy Castle we hired for a party for them and what became a highly competitive hunt for nearly 700 old halfsize Whisky bottles, found buried in the overgrown jungle down the whole length of Terrace Walk.

The Guardians were actively involved in the Garden over the next 3 or 4 years, some even helping with cuttings and planting, until it all got to be kids' stuff, as adolescent sophistication set in. Young adults now, some of the boys come to drink beer in the late evening on the secluded benches at the ends of Terrace Walk. Unlike the girls, they cringe with embarrassment at any reminder of

their earlier involvement; they scatter their six-packs and their fag-ends, but they rarely harm a leaf. Remembering all those Whisky bottles, we pick up their beer cans with a good grace, but there should be a Nobel Prize for any inventor of a Litter Bin that it's seriously cool to actually use.

Going back to the central area, the four Rose supports are as illustrated in Humphrey Repton's Hare St. garden in 1836. They supply height and architectural interest, particularly in Winter months. Backed by the higher strong verticals of the two Cupressus sempervirens, they give some measured formal structure to the medley of plants used here. Once the central area was under way, it was time to consider the much greater challenge of the Garden as a whole. Fortunately the project seemed to catch the imagination of the neighbourhood. Regency gardens' evocation of a natural look, with climbers trained into the trees, and 'interesting scenes' to be discovered on walking through, had immediate appeal and has continued to attract approving comments and give much pleasure. Offering strollers the chance to make discoveries is not a factor in later Victorian formality, when all seems designed to impress, rather than being simply devised to please.

As we know, Terrace Walk - about 200m long, with entries at each end of the Garden - was designed as a splendid platform for viewing shipping in the Solent. It is still a major feature of the Garden: a broad walk of rolled Breedon gravel, easily accessible for wheelchairs and pushchairs and in constant use. People enjoy walking through, dryshod in all weathers as a daily - even twice daily - routine. Each end is now terminated by a solid low wooden bench and there is a small triangle of woodland filled with plants actually found in Nature - Bluebells and Violets, Foxgloves Primroses and Sweet Woodruff, under a dozen or so Hazels, grown to be coppiced for support for flowers in the ornamental shrubberies and the centre. Although as a backbone it unifies the Garden, its existence greatly narrows its already shallow shape. While it was an open threshold to sea, sky and the Isle of Wight, this was not a disadvantage. The complete loss of that aspect presented problems to be overcome if the Garden's wings were not to be seen simply as a strip, too narrow to offer any three-dimensional interest.

Two Reptonian Flower baskets go some way towards solving the difficulty by creating cross vistas. With echoes of the colour of the central beds, they add interest to the views from Terrace Walk, which culminate in vistas across the central planting and the railings to the Crescent, instead of to the sea. The baskets are copied from those in Sir Geoffrey Jellicoe's garden at Horsted Place, which in turn replicated Humphrey Repton's design for the Royal Pavilion. Three metres across, one basket is placed in each of the two wings of the Garden. Exact symmetry was not a consideration; the aim was to make each basket the hub of a circular secondary space created by its introduction. The shade and roots of existing specimen trees also had to be considered. A bare margin cut in the turf about 30cms wide around the outside of the basket makes maintenance of the grass about it simple and reduces the spread of weeds within. Spring bulbs, small roses, Heliotrope and Geranium Lancastriense Striatum are the mainstay of their planting - they are presently quite overflowing with flowers.

Much time was spent identifying, clearing and planning for ornamental shrubberies along Terrace Walk. Planting here aims to provide solid, low maintenance ground cover, with climbers giving fragrance as well as ongoing interest and colour, especially near the 5 small benches to the north of the Walk. The design of these benches was taken from contemporary illustrations and an actual seat of the period seen at Sothebys (Loudon). Their scale and colour fit well into the narrowing space of this small garden. Their lighthearted curves and spirals reflect the exuberant curled S-shaped supports that back the railings and punctuate the Box hedge. They are sited as shown in both maps of the area (1862).

We were thrilled when a young wife confided that her husband had formally proposed to her on the first one the Friends put in. "He asked for the honour of my hand!" she said. "He was quite ready to go down on one knee, but I told him he didn't need to, it was all his". A *Wisteria Chinensis Alba* has been looking very bridal there this year.

All these things were made for the Garden by Peter Clutterbuck, an artist/blacksmith in Southsea, and mostly installed by volunteers (one's a retired builder). Besides being carefully researched, all were chosen and sited with much thought for their long-term survival. They were commissioned with long excrescences to be embedded underground in substantial concrete foundations. While not antique pieces which would attract thieves, they represent engravings of similar items in gardens of the period with careful accuracy. Their current availability makes their replacement possible should they be wilfully damaged. Nearly all are the gifts of local people and the Friends - a neighbouring School gave a rose support and three of the small benches were given in memory of Friends by their families - facts entirely relevant to their better survival!

The Fountain, the last and most ambitious project the Friends have undertaken, was finally installed in 2002, marking the year of the Queen's Golden Jubilee. Water was a missing element in a Garden which had boasted two Bath Houses, and a fountain nearby. The gravelled space was dusty and hot in Summer - all this made a fountain an inevitable first choice. Everyone was canvassed for their opinion, including groups of teenagers hanging out in Terrace Walk. Initially wary at our approach, they seemed astonished but pleased to be asked what they would like - after all, we said, they'd be around a lot longer than we would, so it should be something they would enjoy. They were unanimous, and made ongoing interested enquiries about how 'The Water Feature' was coming on.

It took years, and thousands, but the sound and movement of water even on a modest scale, have enormously enriched the entire Garden. The Dolphins are especially appropriate to the Garden's marine situation and many Naval associations. While care was taken to ensure that the design of the fountain is appropriate to the period, it is from a standard production line, so has no antique value to appeal to garden thieves. Parts - or all of it - would be possible to replace, though of course we fervently hope it won't be necessary. It was thought that something that offered no irresistible challenge, either to the climber or the vandal, which would be repairable and was of relatively modest value, was the best solution. (It did offer a challenge to one beautiful and exotic lady seen enthusiastically emptying a bucket of indignant fish into the very shallow pool surrounding our Fountain. When we tried to explain that it was a totally unsuitable habitat, she smiled brilliantly, totally uncomprehending, and said with earnest care "I come from *Brazil!*".)

The circular pool surround is of Portland stone, cut for us in a simple stubbed profile curve that offers no thin edges that might be easily chipped. Comfortably within the radius of the semicircular Reading Room site it allows plenty of room for wheelchairs and encourages progression past the roses all around it. Water is recycled from a large underground tank, which empties weekly into one of the 14 foot deep brick-lined soakaways once part of the original bath house system.

The control box sited due north of the fountain is a cast-iron housing salvaged from Priddy's Hard in Gosport. Possibly early Victorian, it is sympathetic in design and scale. It is a handsome addition besides being functional. Plans for the installation were a gift from two architects, both Friends of the Garden, and the work was carried out on behalf of the Friends by Gosport Borough Council. Their Grant aid, together with that of Hampshire County Council, the

Hampshire Gardens Trust, and Groundwork Solent, has been acknowledged on a small bronze plaque which records the Friends' gift of the Fountain. This is mounted on a stone found in the Garden - probably part of an original gateway near the Reading Room.

The small size of the Garden makes it a more realistic enterprise for volunteers to manage and sustain. Managing and sustaining volunteers, however, is another matter! They tend of necessity to be largely retired most are 60+ (1 or 2 in their 80s). The Garden must be volunteer-friendly - there was a near-mutiny recently over the awkward stand-pipe, happily averted by a beautiful, securable Tap. The Friends' 'Greenteam' has about 20 members, of whom there are about 6 who work regularly, and four who average several days a week except in Winter. We always need more!

There is a detailed month by month maintenance plan. However, as in the garden at Sweeny Hall (1836) - "A natural look is the aim". This is not a rigorously formal Garden like later Victorian Parks where a leaf out of place was a blot on the unnaturally impeccable landscape. The Regency flavour was more exuberantly informal. Leafy scenes, drifts of one colour into another, flowing curves and trailing scented flowery climbers, all growing in the manner of glades in New Forest landscapes were the gardeners' delight before the young Queen Victoria came to the throne, and Prince Albert made such a virtue of order. A Regency garden flowed into the surrounding countryside seeming part of nature itself.

It's important, when working in Crescent Garden, to bear this in mind, because it influences the way many of the tasks are carried out. A knife-like edge to the shrubby beds is not as good as one hidden by overhanging leaves; the grass must run in under shrubs rather than the shrubs being cut back and contained inside a clearly defined bed. Pruning and shaping everywhere should aim at a natural effect, and so should the way plants are placed and supported.

Tasks for the month, and pointers to seasonal interest are displayed in the Garden Notice Board outside the railings which welcomes every visitor. Our Volunteers luckily vary greatly in what tasks they like to do. One, a keen recorder of butterflies - simply likes dead-heading. Some are enthusiastic propagators. Local interest in plants used in the Garden has resulted in very successful Plant Sales. We had a retired hairdresser, who really enjoyed giving the long Box hedge its annual cut with Salon precision and flair. We were desolate when she moved, but a retired scientist has stepped in, and cuts it on scientific principles with impressive results.

It's best, we find, to let everyone prepared to help find out what aspect they most enjoy. Another essential is flexibility; we tried working on a specific day each week, but it didn't work. Now those familiar with the Garden potter around at times of day that suit them, with regular stops for tea or coffee. It's vital that volunteers shouldn't feel guilty if they can't continue for a while - the Garden will still be delighted to see them back. Feeling guilty is the biggest turn-off there is.

After 11 years, we're still trying to achieve a less haphazard system of management, but for five of them the Garden has been in the Yellow Book, so we must be getting something right - we get a lot of visitors, besides the local regulars, and they are very appreciative. The neighbourhood enjoys it, too. The developing and ongoing partnership between Gosport Council and the Friends has made everything possible. It began while community involvement in Publicly owned gardens was a relatively new idea, and it was enterprising and imaginative to back us as they did. Their Contractors, understandably highly suspicious at first, have become supportive and friendly. A lot of tea has flowed in Crescent Garden! Periodically the Greenteam has a "Walkabout" - to enjoy successes, identify mistakes and note what needs doing.

A letter we had in 1993 from John Sales said: "It is important to realise philosophically that nothing is ever perfect in gardens. Planting is invariably coming and going, immature or over mature. It is all very well to plant a garden according to a plan but once planted it will of course continue to develop, making adjustment, change and renewal inevitable and indeed desirable as some plants become shaded or otherwise under stress. Gardens must always be regarded as a series of processes or systems working together which are in constant need of manipulation."

Over the last eleven years we have learned the truth of this. Loudon's advice on the management of his scheme for Hampstead spells out quite clearly the transient nature of the Forest Lawn effect unless it was rigorously managed. Nature, it seems, will inevitably seize upon the most diligently contrived imitation of itself, and grow all into confusion. "It will become absolutely necessary" he says firmly, "to root out some of the larger trees, and to prune in, or cut over near the ground, some of the larger shrubs". The same ruthlessness must apply to Crescent Garden as it weathers the passage of time.

Sustainability in every Garden is a challenge: in a Regency Garden it is a daunting one - perhaps the delicate balance between Nature and idealised artifice is inescapably transient. We can only persevere, and follow Loudon's advice - and John Sales - as best we can. That's sounded a little sombre to end on, so I'll add a cheering postscript.

The Cruickshank family tomb is to be found in St Mark's Churchyard, over a vault in his Church that was demolished in 1911. Where it stood, one can see the curving rear wall of the Crescent nearby. Why is this cheering? The little graveyard had become completely derelict, its memorials broken and vandalised, full of brambles and rubbish. Following the revival of Crescent Garden, local people have utterly transformed it, repairing stones, researching families. Much of Cruickshank's Angleseyville society is there, a tranquil throng: 6 Generals, 8 Admirals, 2 Baronets, several Church dignitaries, relatives of Nelson, Earl Jellicoe, Lord Denman, Churchill and Bonham Carter among them. Even Sir Thomas Eliot might not have been ashamed to visit Angleseyville - and Captain Charles Austen's tribute could surely be paid with equal justice to those living in the neighbourhood today, who so generously support all our endeavours.

Wendy Osborne 2004