

FRIENDS OF CRESCENT GARDEN

MINUTES OF THE 29th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held in St Mary's Parish Centre, Alverstoke on Saturday 25th February 2023

1 Welcome from the Chairman

The Chairman welcomed all and thanked them for taking the time to join us today on our 29th AGM.

She also welcomed, Our Gosport MP Dame Caroline Dinenage, The Worshipful Mayor of Gosport, Cllr Jamie Hutchinson, Cllr Alan Scard and Cllr Phillip Raffaelli and Mr & Mrs Ian Gallett.

2. Apologies

Chris Donnithorne, Jeremy Sykes, Bill & Rita Rundle, Mrs Suzanne Galbraith

3. Acceptance of Minutes of last AGM held on 26th February 2022. These were passed by Councillor Philip Raffaelli and seconded by Councillor Alan Scard.

4. Chairman's Report – Elaine Martin

Firstly, she wanted to confirm that we have returned to normality this year. We've managed to stage all our events. These have been very successful, almost beyond our expectations!

We started the year with the AGM 2022, of course where we were still using facemasks and handwash. At this point we weren't able to provide you with a proper tea of sandwiches and cake - just safe individually wrapped biscuits with a few kit-kats for added excitement!

By the time that we reached the Plant Sale in the middle of May, the weather was lovely, and we had a fantastic turn out of people. We expanded into a new table selling books and another which we call our Gardenalia stand, as well as Teas and Coffees. Between us we made and sold 38 cakes! She said she hasn't worked out how many slices that is, but we didn't have a crumb left at the end of the day! If any of you wonderful cooks out there would like to donate a cake towards to Plant Sale in May – it would be great.

The main part of the day is the plants of course and she thanked Rita and all the team for growing the plants. All year round they sow seeds, take cuttings and then they are nurtured by Stef, Sharon and Irene at the allotment. We were able to give the NGS a sizeable cheque from the sale of the plants for their charities.

Next was the Garden Party in June!

We set up the tents on a glorious morning – flags, Pimms, strawberries, canapes, and band. About sixish as people were arriving in their finery – a freak wind swept through the garden like a whirl wind! Picked up the tents into the air – all the team were trying to hold them down. The temperature dropped 10 degrees. When I was with it enough to look around properly the ladies' beautiful dresses had been hastily covered with woollies and coats – myself included. Luckily everyone saw the funny side of it and a lot of folks contacted me afterwards and said how much they had enjoyed it. Needless to say – as we were packing up at 9 o'clock the wind dropped, and the next day was lovely of course.

As you all know the whole of July broke all records with temperatures! The Green team struggled to keep on top of the watering. I think that we lost a few plants as we did with all our gardens.

Even though the gardening was tough, we were thrilled to learn that we had won our 18th Green Flag award and a Gold Award in the South and South East in Bloom small community garden competition.

By the time September arrived we knew things were really back to normal as the Michaelmas fair was on again! We set up our stand near the Parish centre and had a brilliant day – lots of new members and just so nice to tell people what we're about.

I want to thank all my team - committee and green team – I can't tell you what a wonderful crowd they are. It's been a real trial at times this last two years, but they still turn up every week. Tom opens up early every Wednesday morning. Irene and Ginny have organised the jobs in the garden. On that Ginny is stepping down as Membership Secretary today as she is a Head gardener now! She is still staying on the committee though. Guy Sitwell is taking over from her.

Also, a big thank you to Gosport council for all their support and a big thank you to you all because without your support it would be impossible to run a community garden like ours.

Thank you all.

LET'S MAKE THIS NEXT YEAR A WONDERFUL ONE IN CRESCENT GARDEN

5. Treasurer's Report – Tony Morrall

The Treasurer presented the financial statement for 2022 for the year ending on 31 December 2022.

This past year has been a very successful as far as our finances are concerned, with our operating income just exceeding expenditure. The membership of the Friends has been maintained and provided an income of £1,345. The Plant sale (including catering, Gardenalia, and book sales) made a profit of £2,693, the Garden Party £1,233, and the Michaelmas Fayre £195. Gosport Borough Council gave us a generous Gardener Grant of £5,820 for two years.

The largest expenses have been for garden expenditure (£4,643), which includes the professional gardener, plants, equipment, electricity, and garden maintenance.

The total income for this year was £10,489 and the expenditure was £10,108. The income therefore exceeded expenditure by £381. This small surplus suggests that without similar levels of income in future years, the current account may result in deficits and become less sustainable.

The Friends do have a significant amount of money in a Business Instant Account (a Deposit Account). This is thanks to the generous donations and bequests received in recent years for supporting the garden. This money is a reserve fund for any future major expenditure on the garden.

In summary, 2022 was a very successful year financially, thanks to the support of the Friends and Gosport Borough Council. The Treasurer looked forward to another successful year for 2023 with an increase in membership and even more public support for our events.

The Treasurer thanked Ian Gallett for auditing the accounts, and thanked the Chairman, Membership Secretary, Committee, the Green Team, and Pam Mawby, for all their support during the last year. Members were also thanked for their continuing support in helping us to maintain our award-winning garden.

5a. Proposed Change to the Constitution: Elaine Martin & Tony Morrall

The Chairman and the Treasurer presented the proposal for changing the Constitution. This was to take advantage of online banking and for better financial management. A more effective way of withdrawing funds is needed; currently, all invoices are paid by cheque and require two signatures of Committee Officers.

The Committee have proposed a change to the Constitution to address this need. This would enable Committee officers to withdraw funds, including online payments, with different authorisation requirements. These changes would require only one officer to authorise a bank transaction or to sign a cheque below a certain amount. For all other payments, including cash, payment will need the authorisation of two officers.

The proposed amendment to Rule 9 has been drafted in consultation with Mr John Donnelly, who drafted the Constitution in 2002. Mr Donnelly is thanked for his help in this matter. The existing text for deletion and the new text for insertion in the Constitution is given below:

Existing text for deletion:

9 b) The money of the Friends shall be paid into such account(s) as the Committee shall decide from time to time and shall be withdrawn on the authority of the following officers: the Chairman, the Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer.

Proposed amendment text for insertion:

9 b) The money of the Friends shall be paid into such account(s) as the Committee shall decide from time to time and shall be withdrawn on the authority of the following officers:

- i. one of the Chairman, the Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer for payments by cheque (but not to cash) or bank transfer not exceeding the amount fixed by the Committee from time to time.
- ii. two of the Chairman, the Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer for all other payments.

The members attending the Annual General Meeting were then asked to vote on the proposed amendment. The vote was unanimous, and the amendment to the Constitution was agreed.

7. Head Gardeners' Report – Irene Buggle and Ginny Whelan

Once again, we must thank the regular support from the Green Team, which has enabled the Garden to be maintained through everything the seasons have thrown at us.

The Garden has had to endure the prolonged drought in the summer, with lots of extra watering required, followed by excessive rain and severe frosts.

Nevertheless, the roses gave a magnificent, prolonged display, and were set off by abundant showings of purple loosestrife and *Nicandra physalodes*, shoo-fly plant, to say nothing of the spectacular echiums in the far east end and the world's tallest foxglove (if you look closely).

We were able to plant the replacement Mulberry tree, a British grown specimen, in October and now look forward to seeing it spring into life in the coming weeks. Also, it has been registered with the Queen's memorial tree planting initiative.

With Yorkstone paving slabs donated by a Crescent Road resident, Tom constructed a path to guide walkers away from the base of the ailing Tulip tree, and then built up the bed with five Hippo bags of topsoil. The aim is to afford greater protection to the root system of the tree and reduce stress. Unfortunately, the excessively dry conditions meant that we had to delay the planting. It was beginning to take shape, however, with some Butcher's Broom, *Fuchsia mycophilla*, scented pelargoniums and others, when the frosts dealt many of the plants a terminal blow, perhaps because some of the plants were not sufficiently well established, who knows?

Development of the brash end (eastern corner) of the Garden has continued. We had tried a general compost area in that corner, but it was never successful. However, we have decided to give it another go and Tom has worked hard in skilfully building a bin in what is a tricky corner. There is still a lot of clearing to be done and the *Griselinia* will be moved to screen the pallets used. You can just see at the back that Stef has given the insects a nice bug hotel.

The vine weevil damage along the western end of Terrace Walk does not seem to have reappeared, so fingers crossed that Irene's nematode treatment has done the trick. Having said that, the ivy ground cover continues in retreat along terrace walk, so we are trying to nurture other plants in the rather dry, gritty soil. *Agapanthus* seem to have taken well. We've also planted more irises, Spanish gorse, common gorse and some *vinca minor*.

The box hedge has largely managed to hold its own against the box moth caterpillar, thanks to repeated spraying. There are, however, some areas where it has suffered extra badly. We feel a combination of the stress of the box moth caterpillar, drought, their location under the cedars and a touch of box blight have all contributed and we now plan to replant those stretches. It will make it look odd for quite a while, but we are left with little alternative.

We didn't plant any new tulip bulbs last autumn, choosing to wait and see how last year's perform again. We will probably order more later in the year, once we know what has re-performed and where there are deficiencies.

The snowdrops are beginning to naturalise and look particularly good around the cedar in the east end of the garden and are defying the odds under the beech tree, together with the winter aconites. They can be spotted all around and another 500 have recently been planted.

Also at the moment, the *Edgeworthia corymbosa* to the east of the fountain is looking magnificent and giving off a beautiful scent.

In June the Green Team enjoyed an informative trip to Brighton Pavilion Regency Garden. Their Head Gardener and some of the volunteers were generous with their time and most helpful in answering our questions.

The fine weather provided the Committee the opportunity of hosting a picnic in the Garden for the Green Team in appreciation of their hard work and dedication.

Once again, the Garden was awarded a Green Flag, the 18th, as well as a Gold award in the South and South East in Bloom small park category. We have been told that the judging this year will take the form of a 'Secret Shopper', so we'll have to keep our standards up throughout, rather than have the panic and stress of a specific judging day.

The autumn gave us the *Ginkgo Biloba*'s most spectacular showing so far.

Down on the allotment, GT members have worked to make the polytunnel watertight again, after the extremely hot summer completely broke down the plastic and the damage was compounded by the winter winds and rain. It is now ready for sowing seeds and bringing on cuttings both for the Garden and the Plant Sale (May 13th)

We have held successful events. Once again, we were blessed with beautiful weather for the plant sale, now quite a social event. We had a bumper supply of plants, nurtured both from Rita's back garden but also grown by Sharon and Stef in the polytunnel and on the allotment plot. We had a record number of cakes and look forward to generous cake donations again this year.

Unfortunately, the weather wasn't so kind for the Garden Party, but it takes more than gale force winds to dampen the spirits of our party goers, or the flow of Pimms!

New for us this year was a stall at the Michaelmas fair. This raised the profile of the Garden, generated new Friends and raised some money through sales. We'll certainly be there again this year.

Looking ahead

The fountain is in need of a new timer, which needs to be done professionally. This seems to be far from straightforward as there do not seem to be recommended specialists in the field who are local. It will be resolved in due course, but undoubtedly at quite an expense.

You may have noticed a somewhat abandoned bed in the eastern side of the Garden. We lost a *Pittisporum* and have been deliberating long and hard over its replacement. Consensus now is that in keeping with the naturalistic aspect of that area and the vista between the cedars, the bed should be grassed over, which is what will be happening in the near future.

Finally, we find all sorts of things in the Garden, but this was perhaps the most curious. Richard found it in the front bed during the very frosty weather. A George hood. The following week it had vanished, whether reclaimed by its owner or not, who knows?

7 Election of Officers

The results of the election were as follows:

Re-elected: Chairman, Elaine Martin, proposed by Cynthia,Barrett seconded by Ian Gallett

Hon Secretary, Gina Rowe, proposed by Tony Billings, seconded by Irene Buggle

Hon Treasurer, Tony Morrall, proposed by Trevor Barker seconded by Raymond Furlong

New Membership Secretary. Guy Sitwell – taking over from Ginny Whelan
Proposed by Trevor Barker seconded by Pam Mawby

Re-elect existing Committee Members.

Ginny Whelan *

Rita Rundle *

Trevor Barker * * denotes proposed by Kevin Casey

Rosemary Harrison * seconded by Caroline Wright

Maureen Bell *

Ginny Day *

Tony Billings *

Nominations New committee member - Irene Buggle- Proposed Rosemary Harrison. Seconded Ian Gallett

8 Invitation to the Mayor Cllr Jamie Hutchinson to Speak

The mayor spoke of the Garden as very special and a great community project bringing people together. He thanked Elaine for the fabulous job that everyone did and said how pleased he was that it was used by the whole community and run as a community project.

9. AOB

Ginny Whelan was presented with flowers with grateful thanks from all the friends for doing such a wonderful job as Membership Secretary for very many years.

Reminder that the Plant Sale will be Saturday 13 May 2023 10am – 4pm and the Annual Garden Party will be Saturday 24 June 6pm – 8pm. A reminder that cakes are wanted for the plant sale and canapes for the Garden Party please.

