

## FRIENDS OF CRESCENT GARDEN

### MINUTES OF THE 32<sup>nd</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

*Held in St Mary's Parish Centre, Alverstoke, on Saturday 28th February 2026*

#### 1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed all and thanked them for attending 32<sup>nd</sup> AGM and gave a special welcome to The Worshipful Mayor of Gosport, Councillor Kirston Bradley, her consort Jon, Councillor Philip Raffaelli.

#### 2. Apologies

Councillor Alan Scard, Tricia and Derek Coombes, Nell and John Rimington, Caroline Wright, Christine Oldham, Maggie Flowitt, Tony Billings, Trevor and Marie-Claude Barker

#### 3. Acceptance of Minutes

The minutes of the 31<sup>st</sup> AGM held on 22nd February 2025 were accepted.

#### 4. Chair's Report – Elaine Martin

Elaine, announced this was her last AGM as she was stepping down after 10 wonderful years a wonderful 10 years as Chair of Friends of Crescent Garden. Elaine thanked all those who had supported her during her time as Chair.

Crescent Garden was always meant to be a show garden, the centre of Robert Cruickshank's Anglesey dream. What would Alverstoke look like today if Cruickshank hadn't run out of money; he had big plans! A Canal System, flowing in from the harbour along Stokes Bay; the other half of the Crescent of course and the wonderful Crescent itself, plus the reading rooms, racetracks – where Fort Road is today, grand balls and fetes. Large houses all around Alverstoke, all built in Robert Ellis Owens classical Style.

Cruickshank's influence could be seen all over Gosport. The Railway Station, Market Hall, Clarence Square. Always lots of columns. (he loved columns) and Crescent Garden, Gosport's gem and a last real link to the past!

The Garden continues to thrive in the capable hands of the Head Gardeners, Irene Buggle and Ginny Whelan who are now joined by Martina Geeson.

In 2025 we won another Green Flag and excelled again winning:

Four Gold Awards in Gosport in Bloom

A best in category – Small Parks – in South and Southeast in Bloom.

Many thanks to our volunteers, The Green Team, who turn up every Wednesday morning, rain or shine, throughout the year. Thank you, Irene and Ginny, and all the volunteers for your hard work and dedication. You are all truly the heart of the Garden.

Thanks to the good weather our events in 2025 were a great success. The Plant Sale is an important Gosport event now. A lovely day out for all the family with lots of plants, grown by the volunteers, for sale and teas, coffee plus wonderful cakes baked by our volunteers. This year's Plant Sale is on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> May 10am to 4pm.

Our summer Garden Party had a Regency theme. A few dressed up as a tribute to Jane Austen, on the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her death. Thank you to the tent builders, pimms ladies, raffle girls and everyone who made canapés. Thank you also to Sarah Binnington and all the young people who served us on the day.

In 2025 we did 2 Saturday tours, historical and botanical, for HODs. Again, we added a little bit of Regency flavour with Ginny and Gina dressed up to add atmosphere.

We ended an eventful year with the Michaelmas Fayre in September. It was a long and tiring day, but the weather was pretty good.

This is my final report to you. My committee and Green Team have been wonderful to me over the years and I know they will be just as supportive to Steve Buggle who is taking over from me today. He is going to be a great Chair and will bring new ideas. Importantly Crescent Garden will go on bringing pleasure and joy to all.

Thank you again for coming today and for supporting our events. I hope to see you all sometime in the garden!

## **5. Treasurer's Report – Tony Morrall**

Tony announced that this would be his last report as he is stepping down due to pressure of work elsewhere. He presented the 2025 financial statement for the year ending 31 December 2025. This past year has been successful. Although expenses outstripped donations, the excess was helped by a grant of £4,000 from Gosport Borough Council, which the Chair secured. This allowed us to build a storage unit and a new electricity kiosk to replace the original which, as already made a big difference.

Members were thanked for their continued support in helping maintain our award-winning standard in the Garden. The Green Team and the Committee were thanked for all their help and said he was going to miss our coffee at 11.00 every Wednesday morning!

The balance sheet can be found on our website, [www.alverstokecrescentgarden.co.uk](http://www.alverstokecrescentgarden.co.uk) and also on the AGM information, which was distributed at the meeting.

## **6. Head Gardeners' Report – Irene Buggle and Ginny Whelan**

### **2025 Successes**

The Garden won a gold award in the South and South-East in Bloom small parks category and was awarded Best in Category, for the area from Kent to East and North Dorset and East Wiltshire. A highly commendable achievement and one we are very proud of.

In addition we won best in categories gold award for Best Public Attraction and gold awards for the Most Unusual Garden Plant (for the *Edgeworthia chrysantha*), Best Bee and Butterfly Garden and Best Wildlife Garden at the Gosport in Bloom awards.

We also regained the Green Flag, our 20<sup>th</sup>.

After much planning, form filling, chasing and cajoling, we received planning permission for the new pillar required to house the electrics and keeping them separate from the water controls. Further work was necessary to prepare the area to get it installed and operative. We now have a new fuse board and the whole system has been fully tested.

All that remains to be done is to resolve an issue with the seating of the pump for the fountain, which will be fixed in 2026.

Planning permission was secured for the new storage shed to be erected and electrics fitted. GBC awarded us a grant of £4000 towards our costs. Elaine and Irene worked hard on our application, which Elaine presented to the GBC to secure the funds.

Getting the ground cleared to lay the concrete base was no mean feat given the bay roots etc. A big 'thank you' to Tom. We are now able to safely store the gazebos, tables and chairs and other equipment, which we use throughout the year.

All this work necessitated a complete reconfiguration of the compost bins and the storage of the Autumn leaves provisionally in the eastern brash corner until new bins could be organised. The new arrangements are temporary while future developments are progressing.

Another success was finally getting the dangerous limbs of the old Tulip Tree removed.

In May last year, Skyfell Tree Specialists performed an excellent professional job on the tree, giving it the best chance to survive a few more years. We are also able to breathe more easily knowing the potentially dangerous branches have been removed.

## **Events**

Our annual **plant sale** was a huge success once again, and we were rewarded for all the hard work of Irene, Sharon and Stef, ensuring we had a sufficient supply of plants and Martina who organised the delectable cakes and everything required for the successful 'café' area. Weatherwise, I just hope our luck never runs out.

At the **Garden Party** we acknowledged 250 years since the birth of Jane Austen, by wearing Regency style dresses.

## **Green Team Visit**

The Green Team's visit this year took us to Diana Hart Dyke's beautiful garden in Hambledon. After a guided tour, Diana generously allowed us to wander back around at our leisure and marvel at what dedication and five hours' work a day can achieve.

We did a tour of the Garden on each Saturday of the Heritage Open Days. They were well attended despite the rain. Many more had booked, but the groups were a good number and everyone seemed very appreciative.

## **Michaelmas Fayre**

We had a much better spot this year at the Michaelmas Fayre, on the sunny side of the road! It was a good day, with Irene's daughter's mixed flower arrangements proving especially popular.

## **Christmas Tree Festival**

Once again, our ace Christmas Tree team of Martina Geeson and Sarah Cooke provided the best in show! Not that we're judging, of course.

## **Plants**

We planted cuttings taken from the Orange Ball Tree (*Buddleja globosa*) that blew down in February 2024 and these are now doing well.

Last year we were fortunate to receive a Mimosa tree (*Acacia dealbata*), which we thought a perfect replacement for the Amelanchier we had lost. However, it had to be moved in full bloom, which is not ideal, and has struggled a little. It has some flower on it again now, and we are monitoring it closely with fingers crossed.

Sadly, however, our splendid Paper Bush tree (*Edgeworthia chrysantha*), blew clean over from the base. Tom did a magnificent job staking it up in the hope that it might survive and the buds open up. It's not looking hopeful, but we are leaving it in place for the moment but are prepared for the inevitable.

Another loss was the mammoth at the east end of the Garden, that finally took a tumble at the end of January. For many years the large ivy-covered stump, otherwise known as the mammoth, because it had been clipped in such a way that it strongly resembled a hairy mammoth with its trunk. More recently it had not been trimmed as no one felt sufficiently skilled to repeat the effect competently.

## **GBC/Street Scene**

There apparently have been big changes within GBC and Street Scene, and we still do not know whether appointments have been finalised and if we will have a dedicated contact person with whom to liaise. Meanwhile, we are making some progress with a new information board to be placed near the east central gate. It would be great if this could be in place before the judging season begins.

We shouldn't end without drawing attention to the Green Team, whose hard work and dedication, even in inclement weather, are what is behind this beautiful garden you all support.

And thank you all for your continued support. This provides the base for everything; a real community effort.

## 7. Election of Officers

Chair, Elaine Martin and Treasurer, Tony Morrall are stepping down after loyal and dedicated service to The Friends of Crescent Garden as is committee member, Maureen Bell.

The results of the election were as follows:

### **Elected:**

Chair, Steve Buggle, proposed Ian Gallett, seconded Rita Rundle

Secretary, Gina Rowe, proposed Cynthia Barrett, seconded Phillip Raffaelli

Treasurer, Neil Rowe, proposed by Tom Kaye, seconded Maureen Bell

### **Elected :**

Membership Secretary. Guy Sitwell, proposed Irene Buggle, seconded Rosie Winkler

Committee Member, Gaye Spencer. proposed Richard Thorne, seconded. Kevin Casey

### **Re-Elected:**

Ginny Whelan – Committee Member\*

Rita Rundle - Committee Member\*

Trevor Barker – Committee Member\*

\* denotes proposed by Gaye Spencer

Irene Buggle – Committee Member\*

seconded by Gina Rowe

Ginny Day – Committee Member\*

Tony Billings – Committee Member\*

Martina Geeson - Committee Member\*

## 8. Plant Sale Saturday 16 May

Martina made a plea for homemade cakes and donations of plants for the Plant Sale. Rita and Martina sent round a list for signatures of people willing to help. Martina thanked those who supplied cakes last year.

## 9. Garden Party Saturday 20 June

Rita made a request for food such as canapés and finger food for the Garden Party. Those who volunteer will be contacted a few weeks before the Garden Party.

## 10. Invitation to the Mayor Cllr Kirston Bradley to Speak

The Mayor spoke of the Garden as a wonderful heritage for Gosport. She said she really appreciated all the work the Green Team and the Committee put in to preserve the Garden and thanked them all for making the Garden such a beautiful place for the whole community.

## 11. Thank You Elaine

The new Chair, Steve Buggle thanked Elaine for the hard work, dedication and support she had given to Crescent Garden over the last 10 years. He presented Elaine with a beautiful bouquet of Spring flowers and a gardening gift token.

**12. Dates for your Diary** Reminder that the Plant Sale will be Saturday 16 May 2026 10am – 4pm and the Annual Garden Party will be Saturday 20th June 6pm – 8pm. A reminder that cakes and plants are needed for the plant sale and canapes for the Garden Party please.

**7 March 2026**