



FRIENDS of MEADS  
PARKS and GARDENS

## Summer Newsletter – August 2024

### Chris Richards

It is with great sadness that we begin this issue with news of the death of Chris Richards on 31 May.

Chris was a founder member of the Friends, attending all our meetings even though she did not live in Meads. She clearly loved our parks and was one of our most loyal supporters. But what Chris will be remembered for most of all will be the exquisite cakes that she made for our cake sales over the years. They were mini works of art and although we would often remind her, she never once claimed a penny in expenses. She also always baked a couple of her legendary Victoria sponge cakes to be sold in support of the Eastbourne Operatic and Dramatic Society's Shakespeare productions in the Italian Gardens.



Chris (pictured above on the right) was a very special person who will be greatly missed by everyone who knew her. Alasdair and Terrie Rintoul attended her funeral, and the Friends made a donation to St Wilfrid's Hospice where Chris was a volunteer. Also pictured left to right are Jan Smart and Barbara Eddlestone.

### Formation of a new community group – Friends Together

It came as no surprise to the Committee that other friends of parks groups are experiencing similar problems with the Council's main contractor *IdVerde* and when our Chair Terrie Rintoul received an invitation from Gaynor Sedgewick, Chair of the Friends of Eastbourne Seafront to come to a meeting to be held on 17 June she immediately accepted. Also attending were representatives from the friends groups of Hampden Park, Motcombe Gardens, Manor Gardens & Gildredge Park and Ocklynge Cemetery resulting in the formation of Friends Together.

A follow up meeting was held on 22 July when the group, now including the Friends of Princes Park, was joined by Councillors Christina Ewbank and Colin Swansborough, together with Lee Banner, Assistant Director – Neighbourhood and Transformation at Lewes and Eastbourne Borough Councils.

The meeting went extremely well. We brought the point home that we are all keen to help and can be relied upon. The next stage, at Lee Banner's suggestion, will be the running of a workshop style session to formulate an action plan.

### Good news

Our application to the John Jackson Charitable Trust for a grant towards the cost of the replacement sign in the Peace Garden has been successful. We are extremely grateful to the trust for the award of £500 which means that we can now go ahead and place the order with Rivermeade. We are hoping that the sign will be installed in the Autumn.

### Community Payback

Walking through the Italian Gardens you may have noticed that both the back of the stage structure and the benches have been painted. This work has been carried out by Community Payback, the organisation that supervises people doing community service in place of serving prison sentences. They have gone on to paint the metal railings in the Peace Garden which were in a sorry state and have done a good job. It is hoped that we can call on their help again in the future. We are grateful to Gary Batchelor and Maxine Saunders of Neighbourhood First for organising this.



### Drama, cakes, and music in our parks

We were again delighted to welcome the Eastbourne Operatic and Dramatic Society, affectionately known as EODS, to the Italian Gardens once again for their annual Shakespeare productions. This year's play was *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and a good time was had by all. Even though we were without Chris, the Friends contributed to the stock of their interval cakes, and we would like to thank members Sally Dowling for her coffee and walnut and Denise Walsh for her lemon drizzle.

Meanwhile, over in The Helen Garden, the Rude Mechanicals set up their beautiful circus tent once more to bring us the play *The Dressing Book* and also to host performances of jazz in the afternoon. How cool is that!



### The Sussex Gardens Trust

We were very grateful to the Trust for awarding us a grant to pay for the climbing roses that were planted in the Italian Gardens in June 2023. They have also added the Peace Garden to their list of notable coastal gardens in the county. We are looking forward to a visit from representatives of the Trust on 12 August when they will tour the parks and discuss further ways in which they can help in our work.

The picture below shows a white rose on one of the pergolas.



## Heritage Open Day –Italian Gardens - Sunday 15 September from 11.00am to 4.00pm

When we heard that the theme for this year’s Heritage Open Days was ‘Communications and Networks’ we thought immediately of the building in the Italian Gardens that used to house the Dieppe to Holywell underwater cable. We see it as a great opportunity to tell its story and at the same time raise the profile of this, the most secluded of our parks.

We will be mounting an exhibition in the stage structure with information about underwater cables in general and the Dieppe to Holywell cable in particular. We will also include pictures and text giving the complete history of the Italian Gardens. Do come down if you are free. We would love to see you.

### A note of thanks

To Tracy Keane who has stepped down as a Trustee. Running her own successful and busy training company, Tracy felt that she was unable to devote as much time as she would have liked to our work. We are grateful for her contribution and also for her offer to continue helping at our events which is much appreciated.

### Summer in the Peace Garden

We finish with an image of the Peace Garden in July taken by Chris Neighbour which shows clearly the result of our work in bringing it back to life, led so ably by our Trustee Anne McWilliams. Our Autumn Newsletter will contain full details of the Action Plan which Anne has drawn up. We are sure that you will join us in thanking her for producing this comprehensive document which will be invaluable in ensuring that all four of our parks will once more bring pleasure to everyone who visits them.



With warmest regards from us all.

Alasdair, Anne, George, Ian, Jan, John, Neil and Terrie

Friends of Meads Parks and Gardens Committee 2024