



# Gosport Society

Registered as Charity No. 289942

**President:** The Mayor of Gosport **Vice-President:** Lesley Burton

**Chairman:** Paul Hutton-Dunton: paulhuttondunton@yahoo.co.uk

**Secretary & Membership Secretary:** Diane Furlong: furlong44@hotmail.com

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## Newsletter Spring 2016

### From the Chair



#### **Feature Photo: GOSPORT 1802**

*The Old Market Hall and Court House belonging to the Bishop of Winchester was situated in the middle of Middle Street (now High Street) but was demolished by Cruickshank in 1812. Note the 'Parish Pump'.*

*From an engraving by H. Dudley 1802*

I believe it has been a most successful year for your society, with a number of achievements. As before, the Committee thought it would be a good idea to publish my report in advance of our Annual General Meeting (8th June 2016 at the Discovery Centre, 7pm for 7:30pm – please try to come along). Our President, the Mayor elect, Councillor Lynn Hook, will be with us.

We have enjoyed outstanding speakers this year (Sept 2015 – June 2016) thanks to the efforts of May Bumford. May is also our chief Planning member, having fulfilled this task for a long time, and she completes a large amount of research for the Society. We are pleased that she has cast aside her recent health difficulties and is up and running again.

Our revised social scene has been well received, initially with our 'Conversazione' – for which we returned to Fort Blockhouse after many years. Worryingly no money has been spent on the Fort for some time and it is now in a poor state of repair. Its future is still undecided, whether retention by the Navy or sold – we await a long overdue decision.

The supper-dance at The Bakery, Royal Clarence Yard – such a lovely setting – was sold out. I must mention Philippa Dickenson who made this event possible providing the venue and all the equipment – we owe her a debt of thanks.

Our visit to the Diving Museum (No.2 Battery) resulted in standing room only as we filled it to the gunnels. Our member speakers did us proud!

I must at this point commend the work of our Social Secretary, Meg, not just for the organisation, but the catering, decorations and details. (Behind every chairman is an even better woman!)

Turning now to other matters, we have this year, awarded a Green Plaque to the Rowner Cottage restoration project – an ongoing saga over many years. Once two cottages, it is now a house, but, with two front doors, has the capability of reversal if ever required. Our award of a Blue Plaque to the *Castle Tavern*, with its history linked to the site of the King Charles Fort, was fully researched by Howard Bennett who deals with these matters. His efforts to confirm the facts for the Plaque were legion.



Our planning contributions to Council Planning continue apace. Our team of May Bumford, Adrian Knight and Howard Bennett, study and consider every planning application that is applicable i.e. listed buildings, conservation areas, trees (the forte of our cycling inspector – Adrian). We give our opinions and recommendations where necessary.

I would like to record our thanks for the real co-operation of Council planning staff adding our gratitude to Robert Harper, the Council Conservation Officer, for his advice. Our regular meetings with him and his staff are most valuable.

Brian Mansbridge who joined us last year has shown great interest and keeps your Committee up to speed on all Lee-on-the-Solent matters of concern.

It is so important to have a committed Councillor on our committee. Alan Scard is in regular attendance and I have to say his liaison skills are just what we want. Long may they continue.

I have I know mentioned a few names in this report but it goes without saying there are others without which the “ship” would sink: Liz Mitchell (Minutes Secretary) Diane Furlong (Honorary Secretary and Membership Secretary) Sue Blower (Treasurer). They are your backroom staff and I thank them all for their loyalty and dedication.

I do, on your behalf, praise our editor and archivist Louis Murray for the production and content of our publications. He fulfils a requirement of our Constitution to try to educate where possible the local people on the history of Gosport and has further ideas for the forthcoming year.

Kevin Casey also provides us with close links with Friends of Stokes Bay, all areas of concern to us all, and with the Diving Museum with which I believe we have a close affinity.

The Diving Museum (No 2 Battery) is in need of very extensive restoration and there is much effort going on to secure major funding. Your Committee would like to support this restoration with a grant of £2,000.00. A cheque will be presented by our president at the AGM.

In conclusion may I reiterate the aims of the Society:

- To promote high standards of planning and architecture in and affecting Gosport.
- To educate the public in the Geography, History, Natural History and architecture of Gosport.
- To secure the preservation, protection, development and features of historic interest in Gosport.

Your committee strives to meet these aims and I believe we succeed.

**Paul Hutton-Dunton** [paulhuttondunton@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:paulhuttondunton@yahoo.co.uk)

### **Honorary Treasurer’s Report**

Finalising the 2015/16 accounts has kept me busy in recent weeks and the books are currently being independently inspected in preparation for the Society's AGM in June. A full income and expenditure report for the last financial year will be available for you all at the meeting.

As always there has been lots to record with events and trips, and, at this time of the year, we are also collecting in the annual subscriptions from members.

**Susan Blower** [gospportsociety@gmail.com](mailto:gospportsociety@gmail.com)

### **Honorary and Membership Secretary’s Report**

At time of writing, I cannot give the exact figure as I am still in the process of collecting the subscriptions (which were due on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016). However, I can say that some members who pay by Standing Order are still paying £10 instead of £11 and it would be appreciated if you could please check and amend your Standing Order.

The subscription remains at £11 which represents very good value for what is on offer. Once joined, members can attend our monthly meetings for no extra cost and we have had some extremely interesting and well informed speakers who have been well worth listening to. In addition, Meg, our Social Secretary has organised some lovely events over the last year, with more to come.

If you are still receiving your communications from me via post but have an email address, it would be appreciated if you could update me so that we can save on postage.

Please remember that if you get any emails from me I will always start the heading with *The Gosport Society* so that you know the communication is from me and not spam.

**Diane Furlong** [furlong44@hotmail.com](mailto:furlong44@hotmail.com)

## **Social Secretary's Report**

Sixty-eight members had a jolly good evening at the Diving Museum on 1st April for our third social event this season. Set in the Historical Diving Society with highlighted tours of the 'unseen' parts of No 2 Battery, the whole evening enthralled many of us. It was really interesting listening to the local snippets of history from eight of our members - all (the snippets!) washed down with lovely wines and yummy sandwiches.

Our host, John Bevan, continued the diving theme at our last Wednesday meeting at the Discovery Centre with a really intriguing talk on Commander Crabb, a hero of the RN. John's book: *Commander Crabb - what really happened* gives a very plausible explanation of 'Buster' Crabb's disappearance in 1956. I remember, as a child of ten, hearing news reports of the diver's decapitated body being found washed up on a shore. They rather put me off beachcombing at Stokes Bay for a few years!

Our next social event – 19th May – is an all-day coach trip to the eight-hundred-year-old/medieval Bishop's Palace in Wells, Somerset. The seats are selling rapidly but still some left. At £23 for a day out this trip represents good value.

If anyone has any ideas for future social events and venues do telephone:  
**Meg Hutton-Dunton** on 02392 601531

## **Planning Sub-Committee**

*The Planning Sub-Committee inspects applications for Listed Buildings (LB) Conservation Areas (CA) and buildings on the Local List (LL). We also monitor the weekly planning list for other important applications including those for trees.*

*Since the last newsletter 62 applications have been considered and the following commented upon.*

### **15/00620/Full Building NM7 Royal Clarence Yard**

Block of 55 flats. We commented that the associated 43 parking permits exacerbated the problem of insufficient parking at the North end of RCY.

Despite all the local objections the plan was approved by the Council Regulatory Board on the grounds that Berkley Homes could win an appeal!

**We successfully objected to the felling of two fir trees at nos. 1&2 Atkinson Close which formed an important part of the local scene.**

### **Pre application P.103/011/16 Hotel & Flats at 8-17 High Street Gosport.**

The first phase, a 54 bed *Travel Lodge*, was acceptable subject to harmonious treatment of the High Street elevation. We questioned whether the second phase construction of twelve flats at the rear was wise. This area behind the seven shops would be far too congested.

### **15/00229/FULL at Anglesey Hotel 24 Crescent Road.**

Demolition of garages and erection of a two-storey building comprising owner's accommodation and garages.

We suggest that approval should be subject to a condition that the garages only be used for cars and the living accommodation restricted to use by the owner's family in order to relieve the current absence of any designated parking spaces for customers.

## **PLAQUES:**

Blue Plaques for Bury House and to commemorate James Lind at Haslar Hospital are being considered. Green Plaques – Nominations required please for good restorations.

**Howard Bennett** [mail@howardbennett.plus.com](mailto:mail@howardbennett.plus.com)

## Marketing and Publications: Gosport Society launches *Putting People in their Places*

The Gosport Society has published the third pocket booklet in its popular *Trails* series. The booklet, *Putting People in Their Places*, invites you to take a stroll around Gosport to discover the streets and buildings where fascinating events took place, and to learn something of the stories of six men and six women who left an imprint on the Gosport townscape.



A handy, pocket-sized booklet, photo-illustrated, and complete with sketch map, *Putting People...* tells the stories of worthies and their whereabouts in Gosport in 'times of tumult, talent and transformation'.



Howard Bennet relaxes on 'Nat's Bench' outside Raglan Court where Nat Gonella spent his retirement years

Among those featured are jazz musician Nat Gonella; spiritual alchemist Mary Ann Atwood and Victorian author Emily Hester Brodrick. Respectively, the buildings associated with these worthies are: Raglan Court, Bury House and Brodrick Hall. *Putting People* is available at a RRP of £1.25 from: the Tourist Information Centre; the *Discovery Centre*; *Explosion!* Museum; *Waterstones* Bookshop in Fareham; *The Bookshop* in Lee-on-Solent; *Pump House Café* in Royal Clarence Yard – or direct from the Publications Officer of the Gosport Society: **Louis Murray** [lms62@ymail.com](mailto:lms62@ymail.com)

## The Hovercraft Museum

Some of the structural and weatherproofing defects in the Hovercraft Museum hangars have been temporarily fixed under a contract with the Homes and Communications Agency (HCA). Parts of the site are still restricted but both main hangars are open and all the craft can be viewed, some internally. Opening is on Saturdays with an entry fee of £8 per head, £5 for children, £7 for concessions or £20 for a family ticket. Viewing can also be arranged on a Wednesday by prior arrangement through the Museum website: [www.hovercraft-museum.org](http://www.hovercraft-museum.org)

The largest and most recognisable craft on site, the two former cross-Channel SRN4s, have been handed over to the HCA. The museum hopes it will be able to retain one SRN4 as a future exhibit, and witness to the UK hovercraft story at its zenith. Following a successful petition, the Museum is in talks with the HCA among other bidders. Ben Avery, a museum trustee, confirmed that talks about the *Princess Anne* were 'progressing well' and said: 'It is positive but we are by no means out of the woods yet... Remember, nothing is certain until we have something in writing that enables us to sign on the dotted line.'

The Trustees are encouraged by Gosport and local support to secure a future for the Hovercraft Museum, the only one in the world to solely feature this British pioneered invention. Having been closed for a long time during building repairs, it needs support to return to the standard of displays and exhibits that do justice to the large amount of hovercraft history on site. To run the museum does not just rely on enthusiasts for hovercraft, there are all sorts of tasks that would contribute: guides, administrative tasks and general help, particularly on open days. Any help by volunteers, if only to give a few hours a week, would be really appreciated.

Leave a message on 02392 552090; speak with Warwick on 07970 986251 or use the contact form on the Museum website: [www.hovercraft-museum.org/index.php/trustees](http://www.hovercraft-museum.org/index.php/trustees)

**Brian Mansbridge**

## A brief reminiscence of my school days in Gosport

I never really thought of writing anything about my schooling, until I realised that I was being educated at a time of great change for Gosport Schools – and the importance of recording events before they are forgotten. I find it hard to believe that I was one of the first pupils at Brune Park and that it is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year. How time flies!

In the 1950s when I started school, it was a 'toss up' between whether I would have to go to Old or New Elson School. I remember being taken by my aunt (my legal Guardian) to New Elson and her being told I would have to go to Old Elson (in the Triangle of Gunners Way, School Road and Elson Road). I had never seen her so forceful before, quite a revelation, as she told the Headmistress that she couldn't possibly cook dinner for my Uncle for 12.10 when he arrived home, and collect me from Old Elson which was nearly twice as far to walk. Those were the days when the main meal was served at midday and my Aunt cooked everything from scratch, be it Steak and Kidney Pie, Curry (served with rice *and* mash!) or fish and chips (the fish bought fresh that morning from *Frosts* in Brockhurst Road). So, it was agreed that I go to New Elson, a school I loved and which is still there today, though Old Elson has closed. I remember the hooter sounding at 12 noon at Priddys Hard to signal lunchtime, and cycles rushing off in all directions. I would go home and be served lunch; from 1245 to 1300, it was music practice, clean teeth and return to school. After school from 1545 to 1600 it was music practice again – my aunt was also a piano teacher!

Although I took the 11 plus exam, I did not pass (it was my birthday and I was more interested in my new Ingersoll watch). So, I went to Grove Road Secondary Modern School for Girls. The Boys' School was next door but we were not allowed to communicate! Mrs Coppin ruled with a rod of iron, although I am afraid I found the lessons, which seemed to be a repeat of what we had learned at Junior School, somewhat boring. I was probably not the best behaved of pupils, preferring to dream of the horses at Miss White's Alverstoke Horse-Riding School, riding my bike and swimming.

In 1964, we learned that the education system was about to change and I was transferred from Grove Road to the old Central School, now Leesland Juniors. This was part of the move towards comprehensive education and away from the Secondary and Grammar divide. We amalgamated with the Central School and became Brune Park County High. At around the same time Bay House (Gosport Grammar School) amalgamated with Privett Secondary.

The joining of our school with the Central School was a revelation to me, I found a renewed interest in learning Algebra, Trigonometry, Physics, Modern Mathematics and a host of other hitherto unexplored subjects. We also shared lessons with boys, although I have to say I still preferred horses at that time! The boys did sometimes bring a different perspective to learning, though, and it was interesting to hear their ideas. From the Central School, I moved on to the building above the old Library (now Gosport Museum) as an interim measure before finally, in 1966, going to the brand new school. I remember the opening ceremony which took place on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1966. The only children to attend were those in the school choir. I was one such, and still have my invitation. The Mayor of Gosport Councillor Cooley was in attendance and it was opened by Dr, the Right Honourable Horace King, MP, Speaker of the House of Commons.



The old Library, Now Gosport Museum

I was lucky enough, through the changed order, to be able to take CSEs, a new exam, with a Level 1 pass, equivalent of a GCE Grade C. I was also lucky enough to remain for fifth and sixth form and become qualified as a shorthand typist with book-keeping. This has stood me in good stead, although I have gone on to further education and different areas of work through my life.

**Diane Furlong**

## Some Memories of the Floating Bridge

Mr Cruickshank, who built the Crescent in Alverstoke and the Market House at the harbour end of Gosport High Street, had an eye for business. Realising that Gosport was to have a railway in 1844, he thought ahead. Portsmouth had no railway, so it would be a good idea to collect goods from the Gosport station and get them across the harbour! A chain ferry (floating bridge) was discussed and his company finally agreed.



This ferry was steam-driven. Fixed chains across the harbour were pulled in and let out through the ship's engine, thus moving the vessel across the water. They were pulled over rollers and passed under the ship before falling back to the harbour bed. There were to be four ferries in all, spanning 1842 to 1959, the first two, *Albert* and *Victoria*, being replaced by *Duchess of York* and *Alexandra* – of which I have several memories...

Crossing to Old Portsmouth with my mother when I must have been about five years old, I was fascinated to watch the chain come out of the sea and pass over the solid steel rollers which had become deeply scored and grooved by the constant wear from the large chain. There was always the smell of the steam engine which I enjoy to this day.

When my grandfather died, his hearse went across on the floating bridge and I remember the crew taking their hats off. He knew them well as he came over on the bridge from Southsea every day to walk up to his surgery at N<sup>o</sup> 2 High Street, Gosport. Some had been his patients.

I bought a motor-cycle from Percy Kiln's in Kings Road Portsmouth and came back on the floating bridge – not being sure how I would cope on an unfamiliar larger bike in the traffic!

In 1952, I boarded *Alexandra* with my camera to take, I hoped, close-up pictures of the first square-rigged ship I'd ever seen – it was Swedish, if I remember correctly. All went very well as the bridge stopped on its way across the harbour to allow the ship through. I had a super view, but the camera wouldn't work! What a shame!

Before most people had radar on their ship or yacht, the chain ferry was the only vessel to move in a thick fog...

Considering that the chain ferry started as a result of Gosport's early adoption of the railway, isn't it ironic that now Gosport is the largest town in the UK without one? How things change!

**Adrian Knight**

## St George Barracks' Lamp – finished at last!



Gosport Society is the lead sponsor for the restoration of the Victorian Lamp outside of St George Barracks Guard Room. Barry Blandon (pictured right) has led the team from the Gosport Shed who have undertaken the work.

Newsletter edited by *Liz Mitchell*