



# 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 2017

### Dear Members



#### **A Gosport enigma.**

Does anyone have information about the origin and purpose of the tower next to the entrance to the golf club on Fort Road? *Louis*

As you may know, Paul Hutton Dunton has decided to stand down from the Chair of the Gosport Society, for reasons of health. We wish him a speedy and full recovery and offer huge thanks for all he has done for the Society. He has asked me to 'mind the shop' until the AGM.

Since the Autumn Newsletter of 2016, the Society has continued to fulfil an active programme on a wide range of fronts. The monthly talks at the Discovery Centre have been well-attended and well-received, covering a range of topics from the noted marine artist WL Wyllie to the development of Gunwharf Quays in Portsmouth and Nelson Mandela's incarceration on Robben Island. Pleasant social events have included lunch at the Stokes Bay Sailing Club and a fish and chip supper following a talk at Rowner Church.

With regard to publishing, the Society continues to enjoy success with the series of *Trails* guides. Articles by Gosport Society writers have appeared in the *Gosport Globe*, the *News*, and journals such as the *Hampshire Family Historian*. Some of the Society's books, such as *D Day- Our Great Enterprise* and *Wings Over Gosport*, which have served the society well for many years, have now been deleted from the commercial sales inventory. A few residual copies remain in store and are offered free to museums and service organisations on request.

In the heritage and conservation field, there has been considerable activity. A survey of Blue Plaques was completed recently and a Blue Plaque awarded to Wakefield House (see below). Work to encourage refurbishment and/or replace historical Interpretation Boards continues apace. Similarly, there has been useful liaison with local museums and heritage groups.

Your executive Committee meets monthly and the Minutes are available to scrutiny by members. The website is subject to periodic upgrading and you are encouraged to visit it regularly. Committee members attend community participation seminars such as those put on by the Army and Hampshire police into the management of the Browdown estate.

The Planning sub-committee continues to monitor and input on planning applications to Gosport Borough Council – to ensure that elements of democracy and accountability are maintained in development procedures that have the potential to become controversial. Committee members work closely with such organisations as the Lee Residents' Association, Heritage Open Days and the Historical Diving Society. From time to time, the Committee receives requests for historical information and/or onward referral to authoritative archives at the Hampshire Records Office. Requests for financial support are considered on their merits, for example, we recently approved funding for the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary booklet for Alverstoke Church of England School.

So – your society is in rude health. Long may that continue. **BUT** – it needs your participation to remain vigorous, interesting and relevant. Please give very serious consideration to standing for the Committee. And please do talk to friends and family about The Gosport Society. We do need to raise our profile and new members would be greatly welcomed.

**Louis Murray** (Acting Chair) [lms62@ymail.com](mailto:lms62@ymail.com)

***NB All Committee positions are open to nomination and, in particular, there are vacancies for Chair, Secretary, Membership Secretary, Minuting Secretary and Marketing and Publications Manager as the incumbents for these offices are stepping down.***

### **Honorary Treasurer's Report**

Having reached the end of the 2016/17 financial year on 31st March, my task now is to finalise the accounts and arrange the independent inspection in preparation for the Society's AGM. A full income and expenditure report for the last financial year will be available to members.

As always there has been lots to keep me busy with events, trips, and day to day expenses. At this time of the year, we are also collecting in the annual subscriptions.

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

### **Membership Secretary's Report**

Membership remains steady at around a hundred and seventy members. Most have renewed; a few have decided not to and a just a very few have yet to let me know. Thank you to all who have so promptly renewed. It does help me.

Sadly, I must that report that one of our members, Miss Pat Edwards, has died. Pat was instrumental in establishing and supporting the Hermitage Garden as a Heritage Area of Special Interest – and it can only be hoped that her legacy will be the continuance of the care and promotion of that tranquil and special place.

### **Honorary Secretary's Report**

Email enquiries are dealt with as they come in and items of interest emailed to members. Sadly, it is not possible continually to update in the same way by post because of timescales and the cost of postage. So, if you have an email address and have not notified me, please do so!

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

#### ***Note from Diane:***

*At the beginning of May, I became Deputy Mayor Elect for Gosport for the year. With the duties involved in this role, and as Mayor the following year (all being well), I would like to relinquish the two offices I hold with the Gosport Society, though I am happy to stay on the Committee.*

*I will not leave these two offices without a replacement, but ask members to consider taking up these duties in my stead as from the AGM. I would afford anyone taking over every help I can.*

### **Social Secretary's Report**

- Our last event was on 18th February at *St Mary the Virgin* (the oldest church in Gosport). Fifty-one tickets were sold and we had a jolly good fish and chip supper supplied by *Rowner Fish and Chips*. Afterwards, Father John Draper delivered a most informative talk on the history of Rowner Church with tremendous humour. It was a thoroughly enjoyable evening.
- Our next event will be a summer supper on Thursday 22nd June, 6:30pm for 7pm, at the *Fighting Cocks* pub in Clayhall. This venue was chosen not only because it is over three hundred years old and the second oldest remaining pub in Gosport (the *Fox* in North Cross Street being the oldest) – but because it can accommodate us! The evening will include a hog roast with green, potato and pasta salads, bread rolls and a dessert of fruit salad and ice-cream. Buy your own drinks at the bar. Tickets, £15 each, will be on sale at the 10th May and 14th June meetings.
- We have had several requests for another outing so suggestions for the destination and for any other events please telephone Meg on 023 9260 1531

**Meg Hutton-Dunton** [meghuttondunton@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:meghuttondunton@yahoo.co.uk)

## Marketing and Publications

Spring advertising of Gosport Society publications for sale commenced with emails to all our usual commercial and service outlets, then follow-up phone calls and visits to sites. After Easter, the larger residential hotels in the wider area such as the *Hilton*, *Farlington*, *Marriott*, *Port Solent* and *Holiday Inn*, *Titchfield*, were circulated. These activities usually produce a spurt in sales. The Society from time to time receives enquiries and requests for assistance into the history and socio-economic functioning of Gosport. These enquiries range from interested members of the public to research students, professional organisations (such as bus companies) and groups with an interest in the heritage industry. Enquiries may involve in-Society discussion and use of our own archives and resources. However, the following websites may also be helpful in addressing people's concerns:

- [www.gosportheritage.co.uk](http://www.gosportheritage.co.uk) - Good for explaining the 'Defence of the Realm' fortifications in Gosport and opportunities to visit places during Heritage Open Days.
- [www.hampshire-life.co.uk/out-about/places/living-in-gosport](http://www.hampshire-life.co.uk/out-about/places/living-in-gosport) - includes personal accounts from people who explain why they enjoy living in Gosport.
- [www.eventgoat.co.uk/go/](http://www.eventgoat.co.uk/go/) - carries a lengthy listing, regularly updated, of events taking place in the Gosport area throughout the year. Particularly good for finding out about small scale community and social events, it includes pub reviews and an explanation of inn signs.
- [www.facebook.com/CelebrateGosport](https://www.facebook.com/CelebrateGosport) - upbeat, positive and often nostalgic accounts of Gosport life by residents.
- [www.gosportheritage.co.uk/gosport-area-facebook-exhibition](http://www.gosportheritage.co.uk/gosport-area-facebook-exhibition) - is the record of the meetings of the Facebook group at Fort Brockhurst which include exhibitions of pictures and artefacts.
- [www.discovergosport.co.uk](http://www.discovergosport.co.uk) - takes a modern perspective on the town, its history, and what it has to offer.
- [www.gosporttowncentre.co.uk](http://www.gosporttowncentre.co.uk) - takes the visitor on walkabout through the town centre, listing commercial premises and associated facilities.
- [http://www.mygosport.org/old\\_rural\\_pics.htm](http://www.mygosport.org/old_rural_pics.htm) - with a photo archive that complements and extends that of The Gosport Society, this site is the 'go-to' one for historic reportage.
- <http://www.localhistories.org/gosport.html> - the site that contains, amongst other entries, Tim Bamber's *A Brief History of Gosport*.
- [www.gosportglobe.uk](http://www.gosportglobe.uk) - the weekly (Friday) on-line newspaper that offers comprehensive reporting of current events as they take place in Gosport. It also acts as a useful record/archive of photographs and featured articles, several provided by The Gosport Society.

Focusing more on the printed document, *The Hampshire Family Historian* magazine (journal of the Hampshire Genealogical Society), offers both an independently-refereed outlet for Gosport Society original research and a reference source for people interested in family history. The intention is to make more focused use of this journal in the next year or two and perhaps liaise more directly with the Gosport branch of the Genealogical Society. The local branch offers talks and presentations similar to Gosport Society's. Alan Brindle for example, recently offered his insights into *Victorian Humour and Satire* via a Magic Lantern Show.

The following articles in recent editions of the journal may interest Gosport Society members: Murray,L – *In Search of Richard Foster Carter (1810-1876) – Fragments of the Life of a Victorian Clergyman. The Hampshire Family Historian. 38(3) pp.172-174. 2011.*

Murray,L. – *Emily Hester Brodrick (1846-1906) – A Life Lived in Two Dimensions. The Hampshire Family Historian. 43(3) pp.136-137.2016.*

**Louis Murray** [lms62@ymail.com](mailto:lms62@ymail.com)

**The Gosport Shed at St Vincent's 6<sup>th</sup> Form College – Louis**

The multi-skilled members of the Shed welcome requests for work on community projects. Their excellent metal craftsmanship can be seen in the restored lamp standard outside St George Barracks.



## PLAQUES:

### Wakefield House

Gosport Society's first Blue Plaque was erected on the *Castle Tavern* in 2016, when the Society took over the scheme from the Council, and we have now decided to award a second one. As so often happens in Gosport, yet another interesting historical and long forgotten fact has emerged. It transpires that No.1 The Crescent housed many famous people, initially Robert Cruickshank who built it in 1826-30. It was named *Uxbridge House* after Lord Uxbridge who laid the foundation stone for the development. In the late 1800s, it was bought by Lord Wakefield as a seaside lodge and renamed, as we know it today, *Wakefield House*. Charles Wakefield (1859-1941) was a wealthy oil broker who formed *Wakefield & Co.* dealing in lubricating oil for steam engines. He realised the potential for petrol engines and designed *Castrol*, so named because it contained castor oil, which became world famous.



He was a benefactor to daring pioneers: he financed aviators, Sir Alan Cobham, Amy Johnson and Jean Batten; he backed Sir Henry Segrave (who raced the *Golden Arrow* and *Miss England*), supported the *Schneider Trophy* and presented the *Wakefield Gold Trophy* for the world speed record.

He was Lord Mayor of London, Freeman of the City, Governor of St. Thomas's and Bart's Hospitals and President of the RNLI. He was also one of the major Philanthropists of the 20th century alongside Cadbury and the Lever brothers. He sponsored many charities and set up the *Wakefield Trust*. Finally, in 1931, he gifted the house and adjoining estate to the National Children's Home.

The main drive to the house was originally on the site of *Miracles* but today is from Stephenson Close. As this is not very prominent, it was felt that the plaque would be better placed on the wall facing the Crescent. The property has now been divided into three and the owner of the centre house has kindly agreed for it to be fixed in this position. Delivery of the plaque is expected in early May and an unveiling will be arranged as soon as possible afterwards. We are currently seeking a relation of the Wakefield family to carry out the ceremony.

Plans are being developed to promote the scheme more widely within the Borough, inviting nominations from the public as well as from members. Please bend your minds to unearth other worthy recipients – but remember that events must be fifty years old to be commemorated and people dead for twenty years. Also, the plaque must be legible from the public-way.

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

### From your Lee Reporter

Readers may be intrigued to know why there is such a variety of buildings styles in Lee, why there are even contrasting styles in the façade of Westcliffe House - standing on its own behind the Fleet Air Arm War Memorial. Architectural variations differ from the grand Edwardian seafront properties to the art-deco shops on the seafront and other locations well away - yet so few terraced houses, except for those towards the Gosport end of Lee. Philip Eley's recent booklet *Lee-on-the-Solent, A Victorian New Town* (available at Gosport Tourist Information Office, Lee Bookshop and Library) gives a detailed account of the development of Lee up to 1940 and unravels some of the historical reasons for its diverse building styles.



Was the curious variety in the façade of Westcliffe House an early example of marketing? Philip and others have suggested that it may have been a 'show home' exhibiting examples of the varying styles of house you could commission for building on the seafront plots.



Why are the art-deco buildings so scattered? Unusually, development plots were not sold consecutively from the expanding centre but in phases and in different areas throughout the evolving town. Unsurprisingly, some of those plots that were developed in the 1930's followed the

then fashionable art-deco; but not all the builders followed trends, still building along traditional lines – hence the variety. Many more interesting facts about the development of Lee are revealed in Philip Eley's book, so my thanks to him for allowing me to include these examples.

Even today, we can recognise how the early development shaped Lee. *Seaplane Square*, currently the site of the Hovercraft Museum, was acquired for Seaplane training in WW1. By WW2, military expansion had extended to runways for the land-based aircraft that defended us in our 'darkest hour'. Thus, military airplanes took a big bite out of the western development of Lee but equally supported the economic development of the growing town.

The pending sale of the seafront part of the former HMS *Daedalus* and the outline development plans appear to be responsibly addressing the 'military gap' and hopefully will see the re-integration of west Lee infilling with housing, shops and business. The plans can still be viewed at the Town Hall Planning Department or on the Gosport Council planning website, reference: 11/00282/OUT. Vital to this outline plan will be upholding the *Seafront Policy*, known as a *Local Development Framework – Marine Parade Area of Special Character*. Following these guidelines will help retain the architectural character and tradition of Lee seafront while countering the developer's pressure for multi-occupancy high rise dwellings, always predominant in any developer's aim to maximise profit. It is essential that Gosport planners, supported by Lee Residents' Association and the Gosport Society, robustly uphold the planning guidelines so that the development is not an overpowering, garish block of flats, but maintains the character and unique setting of Lee-on-the-Solent.

**Brian Mansbridge**

### ***THE MORNING PEOPLE OF LEE – Louis Murray***

*At 7am the dawn is breaking; the people of Lee are slowly waking.  
Soon I shall wander down the street and observe the people that I meet  
On my way to the paper shop, as old boys do until they drop.  
There goes thin Bob, a stalwart him – of Homepryde House – and his pal Jim  
Who leans hard upon a walking stick as through the snicket a path they pick.  
And Elsie from the cleaners dry – at 71 upright and spry, with a lifetime of puffing a fag or two  
But reluctant to brave the Co-op queue. Along the beachfront walking his dogs  
Comes Justin in his purple togs – shell suit, Nikes – poopscoop dangling  
Past taciturn Arthur who's aimlessly angling – casting a line into empty seas  
In the hope of a codfish – his cat to please. And Fred the Ted is always about  
With greased DA and Jaggeresque pout – crepe soles, drainpipes, Death's Head tie  
And T shirt proclaiming, "I Rock Till I Die". Not forgetting Vera from the Methodist Hall  
With steps unsteady, she leans on the wall – to catch a breath and unscramble her bags, whilst  
Flatmate Freda just coughs – and sags.  
And into the Co-op or Tesco Express, they all stumble and for coins and tokens wrinkled fingers  
Fumble. Around the carousel of the newspaper stand – the Times, the Mail, the Mirror, the Sun – are  
Taken in hand. For this is what they do-each and every day – it's a regular habit to keep  
Dotage at bay. And controlled from the checkout – by lanky Lill – vulpine of feature and guarding the  
Till – a rock of the Co-op – a chatty type, she goofs off, mouths off – the bull and the hype. She knows  
Them all and their odd little manners – their lottery tickets and their bus route planners.  
As outpacing oblivion is what it's about – stops thinking of rheumatics, dementia and gout.  
For the elderly and retired are invisible you see – no longer required by the powers that be – for all  
That counts are workers and money not legions of codgers with temperaments funny.  
So, collecting the paper is food for the mind – to not so do would mean life is unkind  
To those in the sunset who now seek the best – of McCarthy and Stone's nirvanas of rest!*

## The World's First Diving Helmet Arrives in Gosport's Diving Museum

The Deane Helmet, the first diving helmet in the world, is now on display in the Diving Museum at Stokes Bay, Gosport, on a three-year rolling loan from the Science Museum in London. This is the first time in one hundred and ninety years that it has been on display to the public. It was made possible with a grant the Diving Museum was awarded to cover capital costs of meeting the demanding standards required by the Science Museum.



In 1823, Charles Deane patented a smoke helmet – intended to allow a person to enter smoke-filled ships to rescue people and property. It was not commercially successful so, in 1828, Charles and his brother John converted it into a prototype diving helmet to allow them to dive on sunken shipwrecks to salvage the cargo.

The Deane Helmet was called an 'open' helmet because it was open at the bottom - rather the equivalent of putting a bucket over your head! A diving dress which came to waist level was attached to it and the water level kept down by the pressure of air being pumped from the surface. This meant the diver needed to work in an upright position; otherwise the water would enter the suit and helmet. The brothers carried out their first commercial dive in 1829 on a wreck off the Isle of Wight. This is the actual helmet used to develop their helmet diving dress.

The Deane Helmet is highly significant to Gosport because, in 1835, John Deane moved to 72 North Street (now Mumby Road) where he lived until 1845. His wife is buried at Holy Trinity Church where a plaque in her memory is located at the site of her grave.

Henry Abbinett, a Gosport mariner who provided boat services to the Deane brothers from 1832, persuaded them to sell him a helmet, making him the first man in the world to make such a purchase. In 1836, some local fishermen asked Henry to dive and see what their nets were catching on. He discovered some wood sticking out of the seabed and thought nothing of it but John decided to take a look himself. Nearby the wood, he found a cannon. He had discovered the *Mary Rose*. John also dived on the wreck of the *Royal George*, a 100-gun warship which obstructed the anchorage. It had sunk in 1782 resulting in the largest loss of life in British waters with over nine hundred people lost. John recovered many valuable bronze guns from the wreck.

In 1840, the Deane Helmet was enthusiastically adopted by the Royal Engineers who were brought in to clear the wreck of the *Royal George*. They, in turn, persuaded the Royal Navy to adopt the diving helmet so, in 1844, the Navy became responsible for its rapid introduction around the world. Thus, the global diving industry was born.



We are grateful to the Science Museum for entrusting us with such an important exhibit which they classify as a national treasure. The helmet was unveiled by Gosport Mayor, Councillor Mrs Lynn Hook on April 7<sup>th</sup>. The Museum is open weekends and public holidays until the end of October. **Kevin Casey**, Director of Gosport Diving Museum

### Gosport Aviation Society...

*...presents an exhibition of various aspects of the long and important local history of aviation going back more than 100 years.*

*Do you remember RAF Gosport (the Grange) and Lee-on-the Solent and HMS Daedalus? Read all about it at the Discovery Centre, High Street, Gosport until 31st May, 2017*

**Joyce Upperton**

## PRESS RELEASE FOR GOSPORT SOCIETY

The organisers of *Gosport Heritage Open Days* (GHOD) are busy preparing for this year's event which takes place Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> September. The Gosport Society enjoys and promotes the heritage we have in Gosport, and the work carried out by the HODs organisers continues to perpetuate the interest in the history surrounding us on the peninsula.



After the 1992 pilot in Gosport proved a success, *HODs* was established nationally (in 1994) as England's contribution to the *European Heritage Days*. Free of charge and right on the doorstep, it is for everyone of whatever background, age or ability.

Gosport ranks seventh in the list of top Heritage places in England (fourth outside London) even above Oxford. Portsmouth ranks eighteenth. Gosport is top for *Industrial Heritage*.

Ms Terry Rhodes, Chair for *GHOD*, said, 'Our *Heritage Open Days* go from strength to strength... Last year we held over sixty great events and people came from near and far to explore our little town. However, we need more people as volunteers who have experience of, or are willing to train, in helping visitors to understand and enjoy their heritage ... A love of history or enjoyment of research can be helpful. People are also required to help with IT/Web and marketing activities, volunteer co-ordination and recruitment.'

Each year, *GHOD* brings in new events and sites. This year's national theme is natural heritage, so more green spaces will be opened to show how land and heritage link up. The events are friendly, with people from all over coming together to explore their heritage and share their experiences, especially ex-servicemen as Gosport has a rich military heritage.

If you are interested in helping, please ring 07531 001003, email [info@gosportheritage.co.uk](mailto:info@gosportheritage.co.uk) or register online <http://www.gosportheritage.co.uk/get-involved/volunteer/> **Richard Bourke**

### **And finally... *What to put in a sandwich!* Joyce Upperton**



As I spread my peanut butter on toast for my mid-morning snack I remember the excitement early in WW2 that our friends in the U.S.A were sending this new, unrationed food.

I had left school and was working – but each day my mother despaired of what to put in my sandwich! Then, locally, we heard there would be a supply of this magical food stuff at *Boots* (would you believe) in Fareham. So, off I trotted to queue in my brief lunch break for a jar. With the addition of a tomato (from a bush planted in the rose bed!) on toast, the nourishing peanut butter kept me going all day – always provided there was bread to spare!

Food rationing continued after the war. By then I was married and remember going to the butcher for something for my husband's dinner. With our one shilling and tuppence meat ration already used up, I was given two thin slices of unrationed ox liver which looked like something for soling shoes! I put the liver in a baking tin with sliced onion and potato and some gravy and it wasn't too bad, but my husband wouldn't eat it. He went off to his mother's house as she, like others, got a 'bit extra' on the black market...

We had one real egg a week, 2oz of butter and 4oz of horrid margarine. You would invite a friend to lunch and use your week's 4oz of cheese and a little milk to make 'cauliflower cheese' – if you could get a cauliflower! Sometimes we had a tin of powdered egg. If a spoonful was mixed with water and poured into a frying pan we could pretend it was an omelette. I guess it had some 'goodness'. I do not remember being hungry and we were all slim and healthy, no obesity then! It all makes me think how lucky we are now with such quantity and variety of food but I am still grateful for and enjoy, peanut butter, and the memories.