

FRIENDS OF GOSPORT MUSEUM

www.friendsofgosportmuseum.org.uk

NEWSLETTER

JULY/AUGUST 2011

22nd September Talk

7:15pm for 7:30pm start

The Studio Discovery Centre
'Alverstoke Charter of Liberty'
Joan Russell, Maggie Ventham

Summer Outing

There will be no summer outing
this year.

If you would like one next year or
would be happy to organise one
contact a committee member.

Friends of Gosport Museum

Informal Coffee Meeting

in the Discovery Centre 10:30am
every 2nd Thursday of the month.

Meetings before next Newsletter

Thursday 13th July

Thursday 11th August

Thursday 8th September

For around 1 hour
meet at Readers' Rest Café

Chairman's Report to the AGM

This year has seen the beginning of the re-organisation of the County Museum Service. Because of the economic situation large cuts have had to be made, apparently the Museum Service has lost 1/5th of its personnel. As you know we here in Gosport no longer have a dedicated Museum Curator, there is now a group of museums with Tom de Wit as Curator. However I do not think that the full impact of the re-organisation is apparent. It is therefore up to us as Friends of the Museum to continue to support it and the staff as much as possible. To this end I am pleased to say that several of you have been working behind the scenes and their work in the "back-rooms" is much appreciated. I would also like to mention those who met with Bryony Hatton to give an Oral History interview.

Visitor numbers to all parts of the Museum have increased this year - with SEARCH going from strength to strength, this really is a worthwhile and successful project.

The Gallery has had several good and well attended exhibitions. Perhaps the outstanding ones were the "Sand Sculptures" last August and the more recent "Lawrence Photographic Exhibition". As you probably know there is now a permanent Lawrence exhibit in the Local Studies Centre. Yet more recently there was the "Exhibition of Local Heroes" the connection of some I thought somewhat tenuous and Fareham seemed to overwhelm Gosport.

I would like to thank Joan and Michael Adams for their many years of support and work on the Committee, they feel it is now time to retire and I thank them again and wish them well. Sadly I must report that , our long standing and hard working Secretary to the Committee, Joan Symonds

has been very ill recently, but I am pleased to learn from a note I received earlier this week she is making steady, though slow, progress; naturally she is no longer able to take an active role but is hoping to come to meetings in the future. I am sure that you all concur with me in wishing her a speedy recovery, and thank her for all the time and effort she has given.

Lastly as to the future, let us as Friends of the Museum do our utmost to keep our Museum alive and continue to give our support to the hard working professionals. Sydney Aynsworth, Chairman

Report of the AGM held on 12th May 2011

This is just a short report of the AGM, the proper minutes will follow later in the Friends of Gosport Museum year. The normal housekeeping, apologies, welcome, including to the Mayor Councillor Allen who kindly attended the meeting, and the proposing and seconding the minutes of last years AGM. One point to come out of those minutes was the picture bought by The Friends of Gosport Museum with the help of Hampshire Council grants via Councillors Peter Edgar and Chris Carter, is now on loan to Gosport Borough Council and is on display in the entrance to the Town Hall. Then you had the Officer's reports beginning with the Chairman's, which is reproduced above. Funds are fine though some of what the Friends spend money on will be looked at in the committee meetings. The amounts held includes donations of visitors The Gallery, that will be passed on for the Geology Gallery for the new interactive of £958. Membership, where a member has not paid their subscription within six months when due, 1st April, will no longer considered to be a member, 5 new members this year were welcomed.

The Chairman passed the meeting over to the President Mr R Whiteley, who then passed it on to the Mayor who then introduced the nominated Officers and Committee members who were up for election. As there were no extra people, the only change apart from the retirements in the Chairman's report, Margaret Ventham has agreed to take on the Vice Chairman's role, all were elected in one vote.

Finishing with the report from Janet Wildman, main item visitor numbers up in all sections, SEARCH, Museum on the Mezzanine and Gallery with a difficult year ahead and thanks to the Friends of Gosport Museum for raising funds for the Geology Interactive. If you shop at Waitrose, look out for the Friends of Gosport Museum fund.

COUNT GIORGIO EMANUEL CHARLES AUGUSTUS DES GENEYS 1848 - 1891

After the AGM, Mary Duly refreshed our memories on the research she has been undertaking for an Italian aristocratic family on Count George Des Geneys, one of its members who lived for over 20 years in the High St. Gosport until he died at the age of 43 in 1891. The story has already been outlined in the March /April 2009 Newsletter, but in the talk she was able to enliven the story with a series of illustrations. Giorgio's story is outlined again in Mary's words, for the sake of any new members who did not see the original article. Ian

His mother, Emily Eleanor Baillie-Hamilton came from a prestigious Scottish aristocratic family headed by the Earl of Haddington, and connected by marriage with many other distinguished Scottish and English noble families. His father, also Count Giorgio {+ 5 more Christian names (!!)} was the son of the most eminent member of his family, another Count Des Geneys, who founded the Piedmontese Navy, the basis of the Italian Navy after the unfolding and ultimately successful struggle for re-unification which obviously was the background to Italian life by the time that Giorgio was a young man.

Emily and Giorgio were married in 1847 in Florence, Emily being in that city it seems because her uncle, Charles Baillie-Hamilton was Plenipotentiary to the Duke of Tuscany, (her sister also married an Italian aristocrat). (Our) George (I shall now Anglicise his name) was born in Torquay in the next year 1848. Nothing is then known of his movements until the early 1870's, when he arrived in Gosport. I think that the fact that his father had died (in Italy) in 1864 and perhaps because the Italian political situation was creating uncertainty, his mother settled permanently in this country, she in Hastings with 3 daughters, George in Gosport. Here he lived in the High St with a Dr. and Mrs Alder I can only surmise but think that his host's profession provides a clue in that Giorgio's photograph shows a sickly young man, and he died young at 43. Possibly he needed continual medical care. The doctor in fact predeceased him in 1888, after this he lodged with Mrs Alder at another address in the High St.

I was able to find out something of his life in Gosport from the unexpected clues afforded by his obituary in the Hampshire Chronicle of July 4th 1891. The first surprise was that he had asked to be buried in Ann's Hill Cemetery by the Vicar of Holy Trinity - so he was not a practising Roman Catholic which I am afraid I had assumed he would be, and secondly, everyone noted as attending the funeral was a Freemason. When I found his grave in the cemetery, I understood the reason for his unexpected request, his grave was immediately behind that of Dr Alder, which suggests a genuine friendship between the count and the doctor. (Mrs Alder died in Scotland in 1903.)

The other surprise, his obvious interest in Freemasonry, led me to contact the Archivist of the local Freemasons Hall. He (Mr. Steve Frost) has been most helpful.

While George's obituary noted that he did not take any active part in public affairs, he was clearly active in the world of Freemasonry from the time he arrived in Gosport in the early 1870's, it would seem to have been his main interest. In fact he founded the Prince of Wales Lodge which still exists and was a member of other lodges. He held many offices, I have seen his signature on documents and his name on the honours boards. As the lettering on his grave is now barely readable, I am hoping that this can be rectified with the help of the Freemasons. The newspaper added that he was much respected in Gosport for his kindness and charitable disposition.

The Count no longer lies in the grave, his body was exhumed in 1905 and reburied in the family mausoleum in Pinerolo in Piedmont in 1905, perhaps delayed until after the death of Mrs. Alder.

To conclude, I would so like to know for certain why he came to Gosport, the request that began my research.

Illustrations used at the talk: George's family tree on both his father's and mother's side. His Italian grandfather's portrait. Post card showing Pinerolo, where the Des Geneys hail from. George Baillie-Hamilton's commission as Plenipotentiary to the Duke of Tuscany. Photographs of George as a young man, George's birth certificate, the house in Torquay where he was born, his 1st home in Gosport at 99, High St. an 1870 map of Gosport town, town plans, the High St. in a heavy snowstorm in 1880., 1881 census, the newspaper obituary the graves in Ann's Hill Cemetery, Masonic documents, George's final resting place in Pinerolo.

When last in Florence, I made a visit to the Protestant Cemetery in the Piazzale Donatello where among the graves of many interesting people, including Elizabeth Barrett Browning's tomb by Lord Leighton, I found that of Sir Charles Baillie-Hamilton. The cemetery is well worth a visit if you have time to spare in that fascinating city. For the sake of my probity as a (mini) historian, I must confess I made the bad mistake in my 2009 article of not checking a fact that I thought I knew. The home of the Earl of Haddington, Mellerstein, a famous Adams Brothers house, is not as I said, near the Firth of Forth but much farther south in the Borders, near the boundary with England. This mistake was pointed out by one of our members – and I was grateful. This geographical fact makes me think that there might have been an established link between the Alders and the Baillie-Hamiltons as Mrs Alder's home, where she died, was only a few miles away from Mellerstein. Mary Duly.

British Association of Friends of Museums (BAFM) Conferences

38th Annual Conference & AGM is on 23rd to 25th September in London Transport Museum cost for AGM in the morning of Saturday 24th free, with costs for other events from £55 to £275 excluding accommodation, events including dinner on HMS Belfast and museum visits. Full details can be found on their web site at www.bafm.org.uk .

Annual SE Western Counties Area Conference Tuesday 6th September at The Oxfordshire Museum, Park Street Woodstock OX20 1SN cost for Forum - Friends: Advocacy and Lobbying in Difficult Times lead by Colin Greig. Cost £18 or if you wish to go on the guided tour to Blenheim Palace £31.

If you require more information or copies of booking forms please let me know. Ian Jeffery Hon Sec

Gosport Museum by Margaret Ventham

In the past there was a local group known as The Historic Records and Museum Society. These good people collected artefacts etc. and did a lot of research into Gosport's history. Godfrey Williams and Lesley Burton are two names I recall seeing on publications. The Society needed help to properly display their collections. Gosport Borough Council took an interest and eventually opened the former library, grammar school building in Walpole Road as a museum and gallery. The school had moved to Bay House in the 60's and the new library was built in the 70's, leaving the old 1901 Technical Institute and Free Library premises available. The Museum Society became The Gosport Society and a new group emerged to support the museum itself – The Friends of Gosport Museum (FGM).

The County took over the museum services in 1991. Gosport's collections prior to that date are still owned by the Borough which contributes financially to the upkeep. The first Curator was Ian Edelman, a keen local historian who has written on the subject. The Friends worked hard in the 90's – organising lectures, issuing newsletters and fundraising for the original computer, microfiche reader etc. The collections grew and the interpretation was updated.

Seven years ago the Council decided to pilot Discovery Centres in the County. Ours was the pilot! Our museum was dismantled and the collections stored. The story-board display with showcases was set up on the mezzanine floor of the new Centre. The former museum rooms became Family History and Local Studies with the David Kemp Geology Gallery. SEARCH museum continued to occupy most of the building and the Gosport Gallery became a government indemnified space.

Faced with the present retrenchment in funding, the newly restructured Museum Services began on July 1st. You are aware that local Museums Officers no longer exist. Erica Munro and Alison Firth are in different jobs in the Service – Erica in the Exhibitions team and Alison with the County Collections. We shall miss them very much. The FGM have given presents and thanks to them. Alison has not severed her ties completely because she knows our site and the stores! Her job at Chilcombe House will allow her to visit Gosport on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of the month. Janet Wildman will be working extra hard, taking on her new job whilst covering her old one until a part-time post is filled at SEARCH. The area Curator for Hants South, Tom de Wit, will be invited to the next FGM committee meeting. Dr Janet Owen, the Manager of the Museum Service, is hoping to meet the committee on July 13th. She may have more to say about talks with other organisations and the plans for the next phase for financing the Museum Service!

Mr Chris Palmer from HQ met the volunteers a few weeks ago. At present there are four volunteers

working with the stored collections. He went through the reasoning for the new structure and made it quite clear that nobody is allowed in the museum unless the member of staff is working there. The days for staff visits were agreed at the meeting and if Alison is unavailable another person will come. We may know in advance who it will be. There will also be a booking form in reception to make appointments for the public to see Alison - of necessity these will be fairly short meetings, however you will have access to the books and files of information upstairs in the Research Room. Don't forget the website has a lot of information for research.

The Senior Keepers of the County Collections have been reduced from 6 to 4. The areas of responsibility have been merged :

Natural Sciences	- Christine Taylor
Archaeology	- Dave Allen
Social and Industrial History	- Oonagh Palmer
The Arts and Textiles	- Jill Arnott

Friends who have joined or have lived here a short time may find these notes of interest. I've gathered them rather as a rolling stone gathers moss whilst auditing the books in the Research Room. Where my memory is faulty the older FGM members will correct me! M. Ventham

I unexpectedly learnt a 'pearl of information' to the credit of Gosport, when I listened to the answers of the young doctor on the Mastermind T.V. quiz whose chosen subject was William Wilberforce. The question was "Who was the divine who greatly influenced W.W. in the direction of opposing the Slave Trade?". The answer was (and is) Rev. Philip Doddridge, one time minister of Gosport Congregational Church (then on the site of the present Post Office in the High St) Mary Duly.

Part of the Museum Manager's Report to the AGM

Much of the information in the report are also included in the reports by the Chairman and Vice Chairman. Ian

Looking Ahead

The Gallery programme for the summer is an exhibition by the Photographic Alliance of Great Britain, and then a programme of events for families over the school holiday period, followed by a 'Treasures of the town Hall' exhibition and then 'St Vincent's Young Creatives' - a youth art exhibition.

In the Autumn, Gosport will be the opening venue for a Museums Service in-house exhibition on the subject of tea.

As one of the results of the enormous amount of behind the scenes collection auditing, documenting and digitising, Alison and the Provincial Buses Society will be producing a web based exhibition on the history of Provincial Buses locally, showcasing a wealth of our stored collections.

Fund Raising

Through the Auspices of the Friends, we have now raised £1,000 towards the child friendly 'interactive' for the Geology Gallery and the Museums Service are putting together a bid to the

Curry Fund for match funding. We will need to keep up the fundraising as there will not be core funding for any capital projects of this type in the near future.

Friends of Gosport
Museum

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Mary Colyer
Mary Duly
Michael Leopold

Please ask if you would like to see the much fuller quarterly reports by Janet, Emma and Erica/ Alison which details all museum activity in much more depth. Janet Wildman

I have some copies of the report given to the AGM if you would like one. There are also copies of the accounts to 31st March 2011. Ian

FGM Badges

I have been given some Friends of Gosport Museum badges, so if you are at an event and or volunteering as a member of the Friends of Gosport Museum and feel a badge showing why you are there would be useful, let me know and you can borrow one of the badges. Ian

Subscriptions

The subscription for the year 2011/12 is due from 1st April 2011, £5 for a single and £7.50 for a joint membership. Please send your payment to Linda Hedley. If you wish to pay by standing order, contact David Moore. Ian

If you have any information or photos that you think may be of interest to members of the Friends of Gosport Museum or others, please let me have them by post or email, details below, by 12th August for the September/ October Newsletter, include details for events in early November 2011. Thank you. Ian

Friends of Gosport Museum web site at

www.friendsofgosportmuseum.org.uk

Please send contributions for the Newsletter to
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If you would be happy to receive this Newsletter
by email please let me know.
The views expressed are not necessarily those of
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