

FRIENDS OF GOSPORT MUSEUM

NEWSLETTER

February 2007

ILLUSTRATED TALK

“HMS Warrior”

by Maurice Hutton

Wednesday 7th March 2007

at 7.30 pm

in The Discovery Centre

Admission Free All Welcome

FUTURE EVENTS

March 7th Talk by Maurice Hutton

May 24th 7:30pm AGM and talk by Janet Wildman in the Discovery Centre

July 1st 12.30 - 3.30pm Summer Social

September 22nd Coach trip to Chilcombe House - Hampshire Museum Service headquarters

December 19th 3.00 - 5.00pm Friends Christmas Party in the SEARCH Centre

Friends of Gosport Museum - Renewal Subscription

Enclosed with this Newsletter is a form for members to renew their membership for the year beginning on 1st April 2005. Details of how to join the Friends (Annual subscription is £5-00 for Individuals and £7-50 for Families) are given at the bottom of the last page of this Newsletter.

PRIDDY'S HARD

There has been a great deal in the local press regarding this area of Gosport which basically consists of :-

- 1) **The Ramparts** - now much overgrown but once an important part of the defences of Portsmouth Harbour. It was recently announced that the Council intends to transform this area into a park and nature conservation area for the enjoyment of the public. Friends of the Museum are by definition people who care about the preservation of our heritage and this proposal is really welcome.
- 2) **Explosion Museum** - the central core of the old naval munitions centre developed a few years ago into an award winning museum concerned with hundreds of years of naval fire-power. As such it is not only of local but national importance. Its financing has been a subject of much controversy between political parties on the Council and Friends can only hope that this part of our heritage will be safely preserved for the future.
- 3) **Numerous other buildings and car parking areas** - suggestions for these are numerous and vague ! It is to be hoped that any development will take into account the wishes of the people of Gosport.

The Priddy's Hard Fortifications

Panic stricken reactions to what seem like threats to England's safety are nothing new !

Three hundred years ago, in 1707, the Act of Union uniting England and Scotland excluded the Roman Catholic heirs of James II from the English throne. Spies from France immediately reported that James II's son, also called James - the great grandson of James VIth of Scotland who succeeded Elizabeth Tudor to be crowned James I of England in 1603 - was going to invade our shores to reclaim his throne.

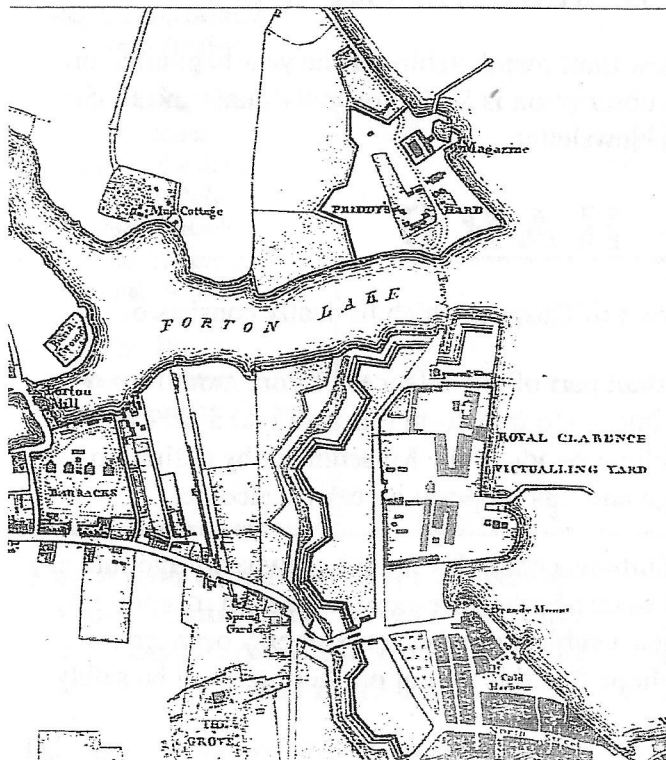
The panic extended to Portsmouth and Gosport. What if he should land in Stokes Bay and try to take Portsmouth Dockyard so crippling the navy ? Gosport's fortifications, ongoing since 1677/8 were reviewed.

By Act of Parliament passed in 1708/09 a vulnerable piece of land was purchased from Jane Priddy of Fareham on which to extend Gosport's already extended fortifications. But nothing happened for half a century. . . .

In 1756 the start of the Seven Years War highlighted the dangers of France as an enemy and the extension of Gosport's ramparts was put in hand. Godfrey Williams in his book "The Earlier Fortifications of Gosport" described it as a primitive version of the ramparts and moat which now runs roughly parallel to Weevil Lane and round the neighbouring portion of Priddy's Hard. All this was before the transfer of the Naval Magazine from Portsmouth to Gosport in 1770.

Some years later, between 1778 - 1790, the ramparts and moat were considerably strengthened resulting at Priddy's hard in the construction of two demi-bastions - that is pointed shaped fortresses projecting beyond the ramparts to provide flanking covering fire.

Joan Russell



Part of a map "Surveyed and executed in Lithography by I.T.Lewis, Winchchester 1832"

The map shows clearly the ramparts running from near North Street up roughly parallel to Weevil Lane to the West of The Royal Clarence Victualling Yard and then surrounding the Magazine at Priddy's Hard to the North of Forton Lake.

Also clearly shown are Spring Garden, the Barracks on Forton Road, to the North of which is Forton Mill, and on the other side of a branch of Forton Lake, a burial ground. North of Forton Lake is "Mud Cottage". Why is this pictured and who lived there ?

The 1759 Fort at Priddy's Hard

In the early days of Heritage Weekends I used to do tours of the Priddys Hard Fort and Ramparts which were always very popular. It was not long after the depot had closed and they were still in reasonable condition. Sadly today they are considered too dangerous to allow the public access.

The Ramparts consist, as you would expect, internally of a large earth bank surrounded by a mostly dry moat 25 yards wide and are the only complete part of the Gosport Ramparts left. They stretch for 665 yards from the Hardway shore to Forton Creek, with a small tunnel through the middle called the Sallyport. This is interesting because it is "S" shaped so that an enemy attacking could not fire through to hit anyone on the inside, but anyone trying to get through from the outside was an easy target. Originally there were oak doors at each end and until a few years ago the hinges were still there. Sadly, the brick main gate and drawbridge at the Priory Road end went many years ago and there are no records of its demolition. It is shown on maps of the mid 1800s.

The area was bought pre 1759 from Jane Priddy, Thomas Missing and the Vicar of Fareham, and the Ramparts have still got the remains of several small magazines in them. You can walk round them on the inside where the new estate is, but they are so overgrown that they look like a jungle. In Depot days the undergrowth was kept very short because of the fire risk.

In 1716 there were a lot of protests from the residents of Old Portsmouth about having the Square Tower in Broad Street as a Magazine for both the Army and the Navy and a petition was put up to the king to get it removed. Four of the reasons given were as follows:-

- No.1 In carrying the Powder from thence about 400 yards distance to the end of the Point, and by shaking the barrels together in the cart there has been a trail of powder along the street which in war time is the most popular part of town.
- No.2 When funerals pass by there the sparks from the Links and Torches have been seen to fly against the walls and windows.
- No.3 At shipping of the Powder from the Point among a crowd of drunken, smoking sailors tending the boats is also a very great hazard.
- No.4 The Magazine being next to the sea within reach of shipping, makes it a good mark to bombard, where 6000 barrels of Powder are held.

But it wasn't until 1768 that Royal approval was given for the powder to be moved and five places were proposed. Horsea Island, Priddys Hard, Whale Island, Boatswains Hill Coppice (The present RNAD Elson, Frater and Bedenham) and Portchester Castle. Priddy's Hard was not chosen at first as it was considered to close to the ships in the harbour and the early Clarence Yard in the case of an explosion.

After much consideration Priddy's Hard was chosen and in 1770 work started on the Powder Magazine. It was completed in 1773 and it then had to stay empty for 3 years for the cement to dry out. It was finally opened in 1773.

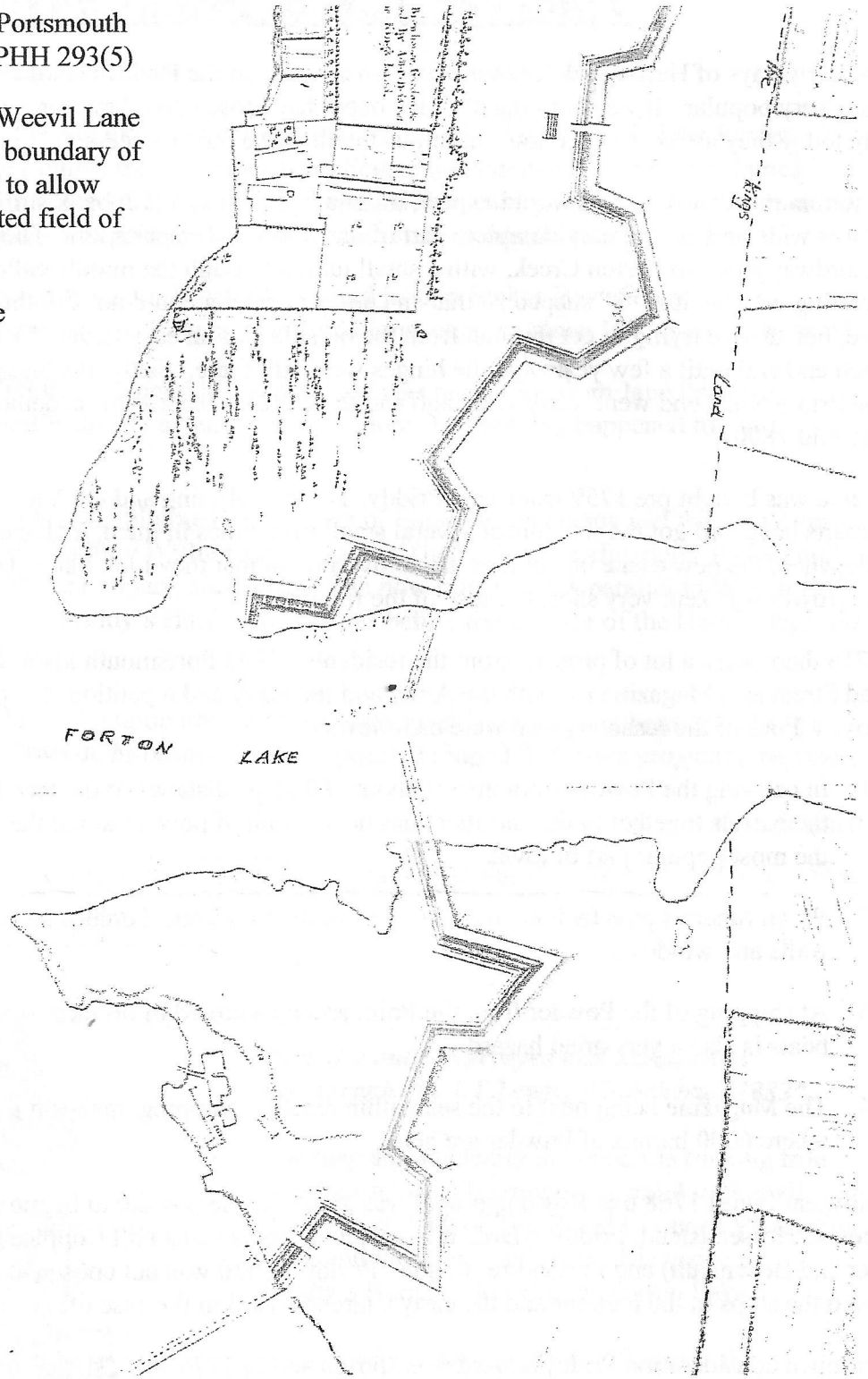
In 1886 as there was no more room inside the Ramparts, the first buildings outside were built. They were the Shell Filling Rooms which are still there today, but not for much longer as there is a plan to demolish them and replace with new residential buildings.

Bill Mansfield

Gosport by Read 1775 (Maps of Portsmouth no 87g). Public Records Office MPH 293(5)

Showing the Ramparts parallel to Weevil Lane and round Priddy's Hard. Note the boundary of "The King's Land" - land required to allow guns on the ramparts an unobstructed field of fire.

Also note the area now in Clarence Yard where it is stated "This Brewhouse Garden inclosed by A.B.C.D. is not the King's Land"



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**Please send contributions for the Newsletter
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The views expressed are not necessarily those of
The Hampshire CC Museums Service or its staff

**Membership of the Friends of Gosport
Museum is open to all - Ask at the Discovery
Centre for an Application form or contact
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Gosport PO12 4HZ
This Newsletter was printed and produced with
the help of the Museum**