



FRIENDS OF GOSPORT MUSEUM

Supporting Gosport Museum & Art Gallery
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NEWSLETTER MAY/ JUNE 2021

Gosport Museum and Art Gallery

Friday 28th 10am to 8pm & Saturday 29th
10am to 4pm May 2021
Spring Makers Fair (Gosport Cultural
Consortium Project)

Saturday 29th May Business of Making
Seminar 10am-4pm (Gosport Cultural
Consortium Project)

Friday 4th June to 28th August
Gosport Past and Present Exhibition
Local Artists
Neil Marshall and David Whitson
Thursday to Saturday each week.

For more information see the Venue
Managers Report below.

Free admission,
www.hampshireculture.org.uk or
Tel: 023 9387 7840

Report from Chair

Welcome to the Summer Newsletter though it doesn't feel like the summer we are familiar with. Never before have I had occasion to use heating and the electric blanket in May! However, the new museum is in the process of being planned – a specialist company has been employed to advise and design. Volunteers have been in this week for training sessions and to help with the sorting of objects in the Room Sets at Search. These objects will be returning to the stores at Chilcomb or to museum collections from which they were borrowed in 1995 for the creation of Search Hands -On- Centre, the educational museum here in our old building.

Today Search is alive and kicking but schools can access Victorian and 1950s social history in other ways so the Room Sets are not being used. The natural science collections, including Geology, are used for planned activities. These are needed by schools and will replace the upstairs Room Sets.

Jenny Stevens has given the Stores Volunteers some jobs to do. Today Jenny explained the work she must do to achieve the up-date of Gosport Museum Collections on the computerised system named MODES. In the past, there was a reluctance to use this system. Staff preferred to have Accessions of Collections on their own computers which they knew how to use! These days MODES has been rejuvenated during the Covid closures and is now stored in the 'CLOUD' so everyone in HCT can access what's in every HCT site collection.

This saves time phoning, emailing and travelling between sites. MODES must know exactly where every object is stored - the bay and shelf number, the box number if needed, to find objects in every site collection. With camera phones an image sent by a site manager can also save someone a worthless journey. Staff need to use the system when planning exhibitions for local and county-wide venues, to answer enquiries from the public and use museum objects for

many other cultural and educational reasons. A lot of work will be done as rooms in the building are cleared and contents packed away for the redevelopment.

An empty shop in the High Street will be rented to use as an on-going venue for a mini museum, meeting place, art gallery and the very popular play area for children. It's still hoped that the redevelopment will start in October and the re-purposed old building will re-open next year as "Gosport Museum and Art gallery", a cultural hub to help the High St attract people and businesses using the Heritage England grant from the government for which the old building qualifies as Heritage – the only site to receive this direct grant. Maggie Ventham 20th May 2021

Venue Manager's Report

Here are the dates for opening.

Makers Market 28 May 10am-8pm & 29 May 10am-4pm – This event is hosted by the Gosport Cultural Consortium Partners which is led by HCT. It is a free event to support local creative makers giving them an opportunity to showcase and sell their goods. There will be over 35 stalls throughout the building and demonstrations also.

June 4 – Aug 28 – Gosport Past and Present exhibition with the work of 2 local artists Neil Marshall and David Whitson. The exhibition will include photos and items from the collection. In July the exhibition will also include work produced by pupils from Brune park and Bay House Schools created as part of the 'Shaping Our Shores' project which focuses on the Stokes Bay Conservation area. The gallery will initially open 3 days a week, Thurs-Sat. The plan is for this to be increased from the beginning of July to Mon- Sat once restrictions are lifted further. Wendy Redman

Connections (Lord Wakefield/ Amy Johnson's Brooch) by Mary Duly

I am fascinated by Connections, cemented by an excellent T.V. Programme some years ago on this subject. Two current subjects have come to my attention recently, which unexpectedly proved to have such an unexpected connection, a brooch shown at an Antiques Road Show and the Mabinogion - what do I hear you say?

The 1st connection came through an item on a repeated Antiques Road Show, as they are in these CoVid days. A man brought a most interesting article to the attention of an expert, a diamond brooch looking a bit like an RAF brooch, it certainly had the 2 wings - but then it became very different. On the left half was the word in blue enamel, 'England', on the right 'Australia'. Then comes the Gosport connection, the central section contained in diamonds the initials, C.C.W. (the initials of Lord Wakefield, - Charles Cheer Wakefield), a later Lord Wakefield who certainly had strong connections with Gosport. He was a generous benefactor to the National Children's Home which occupied a site on the corner of Clayhall, The Crescent and Anglesey Road and was also involved financially with the Schneider Trophy, once an exciting aerial event in this Solent area.

His connection with this brooch though is something different, Lord Wakefield it seems actually sponsored Amy Johnson's ground breaking 1st ever flight to Australia, the A.R.Show even showed a photograph of Amy wearing the brooch.

How though could it come about that it should turn up at an Antiques Road Show? The brooch had been picked up at a charity shop ((of course) on the Welsh Coast not so long ago, and amazingly that was relevant, as it was known that Amy used the beach there for practising - you could do that with an aeroplane in those pioneer days! Always being short of the necessary cash to further her ambitions, it was hazarded she might have pawned the brooch , or even perhaps, lost the brooch on the beach, that stage of the story is not just known.

The story of the brooch was, of course, intriguing in itself, but to me, a Gosport resident for many years, the link it revealed between Lord Wakefield, Gosport and Amy Johnson was fascinating. (I am so old that I can remember Amy's flight to Australia and the sadness we felt in wartime when her plane went missing over the Thames and never recovered. She was working as a transporter of aeroplanes from the factories to where they were required)

The Mabinogion

Now for the 2nd story, which I irreverently referred to as the Mabi - what -.not, the word Mabinogion not being easy to get ones tongue around admittedly, heard of at a national level but I realised had a number of personal to Gosport implications.

The story begins back in the 1980's!! Having a drink with friends one lunchtime at the Old Lodge in Alverstoke, one friend unexpectedly said to me, "Have you heard of the Mabinogion?". I hadn't, said so ("What a strange question!", I thought) and my friend just replied, "Well, my grandmother translated it", and left it at that. How I wish she had enlarged on this as recently I have learned that it was a subject on which I would have been only too happy to have learnt more. Recently I have. I had never forgotten her strange question.

A few weeks ago, there was a major T.V. programme called, "Welsh Art", part 1 of which covered the early years of Welsh cultural life - and the Mabinogion was a key element of this long ago time . Apparently it is an early(pre- Norman times) medieval collection of Welsh stories which the Welsh regard as a key feature of their national culture, something akin to the Lindisfarne Gospel to the English, and a product of the same time.

How the story harks back to that conversation in the Old Lodge of nearly 40 years ago, is the fact that the T.V. programme told us that the person who translated the Mabinogion, my friend's grandmother was unexpectedly, in the early 19th C, Lady Guest, the wife of one of the iron masters who were making fortunes out of Henry Cort's patent to produce wrought iron by a much cheaper, more efficient method than formerly, and which Henry had perfected at his experimental blast furnace at the western end of the car park at the bottom end of the now A32, and was, in fact, one of the major improvements helping to bring in the Industrial Revolution.

The iron masters had acquired the patent cheaply from the Admiralty who had sat on their possession of this key patent ever since Henry had had to pass it over to them years before, and passed it to the iron masters. This area of S. Wales possessed the natural resources of coal and iron ore and Henry's process had come into its own, though not for the Cort family unfortunately.

You will remember that Henry had made his key advance here in Gosport at his forge which when we came to Gosport in 1956, still existed at the western end of the car park that still exists at the bottom end of the A.32. An unsympathetic Council at the time (maybe 60's) sadly cleared this key example of national Industrial Archaeology off the face of history. You will probably know too that the Ferry Gardens area was the spot where Henry, after his experiments (in the mid 18th C) deposited the detritus from his blast furnace, just up the road - and was in trouble with the then authorities too!

Now I knew who my friend's grandmother was, Lady Guest, one of the opposition you might say, wife of one of the iron masters who were " making hay" in that South Wales area around Merthyr Tydfil out of Henry's patent: they lived in luxury, the workers in abysmal conditions.

But the situation is not as it seemed. Lady Guest adopted what seemed to her English friends and relations a most odd, intense interest in the Welsh language and culture, it was regarded as an an aberration even.

But it is Lady Guest who we, and the Welsh, have to thank for saving this ancient collection of stories by her translation, for remember the English at that time were trying to stamp out the Welsh culture, it was sadly thought the correct thing to do.

How I wish I had known what a trove of information that Gosport historians would have been delighted to have known about, by an enquiring answer to my friend in The Old Lodge all those years ago.

My friend's husband too has a place in Gosport's history as he was Admiral McClintoch, who was then the Medical Officer in Charge, (MOIC) of Haslar Hospital who had been given the responsibility for the building of the Crosslink which, of course, changed the face of the Hospital!. (That's another thing I have learned at 95! Nearly every new idea, construction welcomed perhaps at the time, will be turned upside down some years into the future - the crosslink has gone now!) Mary Duly (Thank you Mary, what would I do without your articles, Ian)

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Subscriptions for Friends of Gosport Museum due from 1st April each year at £6 single £9 joint please send the Payments (cheques made to: Friends of Gosport Museum) to Linda Hedley, 7 Fairhome Close, Elson, Gosport, Hants PO12 4HZ. Tel: 023 9258 6130

Joined since 1st November 2019 your subscription lasts to 1st April 2021.

Would You Like to Volunteer?

If you would like to volunteer for SEARCH it would be Wendy at wendy.redman@hampshireculturaltrust.org.uk or for the Museum and Gallery Katie Andrews VSA katie.andrews@hampshireculturaltrust.org.uk

New Education Officer Gemma Waters, as both new staff are part-time please allow them time to get back to you as not in every day. Thank you

If you have information, articles, events or photos that may be of interest to Friends of Gosport Museum for the July/ August Newsletter, please send them by 25th June or earlier if you can to: Ian Jeffery 11 Harcourt Rd, Gosport, Hants PO12 3NR ian@gosport.info

The Newsletter can be received by email (Adobe Reader .pdf) let me know if you would be happy to receive it this way. This will help save FoGM cost, keeping the subscription down. Thank you Ian

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