

FRIENDS OF GOSPORT MUSEUM

www.friendsofgosportmuseum.org.uk

NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2010

Friends of Gosport Museum

Christmas Party

Tuesday 14th December 2010

The Studio Discovery Centre

2 to 4pm £1

Next Talk 31st March 2011

Discovery Centre

Details to follow

Friends of Gosport Museum

Informal Coffee Meeting

in the Discovery Centre 10:30pm

Every 2nd Thursday of the month.

Meetings before next Newsletter

Thursday 11th November

Thursday 9th December

Thursday 11th January

For around 1 hour meet at
Readers' Rest Café

Chairman's Letter

Dear Friends,

As you may know there are to be sweeping changes in the Hampshire Museum Services. This has been brought about by the ending in March 2011 of Central Government funding in the form of 'Renaissance Money'. The present review seems likely to reduce staffing levels by 20% and that is before the cuts to be announced by The Chancellor. Museums, in general, I fear will have to envisage further reductions to their budgets.

The Committee recently had a meeting with Dr Janet Owen, the head of Hampshire Museum Services. She explained to us what this means for Hampshire and especially Gosport. Hampshire Museums will lose individual Curators and be re-organised into groups with a Curator responsible for each group; the Curators will be centred at Chilcomb House and a small, perhaps part-time, staff will remain at each Museum Site. We in Gosport will retain The Museum on the Mezzanine, Search, The Gallery and the Geology Section but obviously their activities will be reduced.

I believe that it is now up to us as Friends of the Museum to become more active. We need to be more pro-active and help as Guides and assist the hard pressed Staff with the displays and behind the scenes. We must not let the Museum become "shabby" and stagnate. I realise that none of us is getting any younger and that it is difficult to find the time; we need new young members who are eager to achieve our aims as Friends of The Museum. Do we want to lose our Museum?

Away from the gloom – the past months have seen another successful trip to Bournemouth – thanks to the hard work of Mary Duly. The Forgotten Emperor Exhibition and the Sand Sculpture were both very well enjoyed (there were over 8,000 visitors to these exhibitions!) and I thank the 12 volunteers who have put in 97 hours of work with the collections – it appears that Gosport has the

largest store of Museum artefacts in the County outside Chilcomb.

A date for your diary – Tuesday 14th December – Our Christmas Party , 2pm on the Mezzanine floor – Christmas Fare will be provided by the Discovery Centre Café. Come along and make this Happy and Joyful time. My Best Wishes to you all, Sydney Aynsworth Chairman

The Future of Museums

Many of you will have heard about the Restructuring Plan for Hampshire Museum Services. To discover how restructuring will affect services in Gosport, FOGM Committee met Janet Owen – Manager of Museum Services for Hampshire - on October 8th. Janet kindly gave us the background to the proposed plan to cope with reduction in funding and yet retain as much of the service as possible. Council Tax cannot make up for loss of central government funding. Museums, Libraries and Galleries have been supported nationally by the “Renaissance Fund”. This money will not be renewed in the same way in April 2011. Hampshire will lose about £1m from this fund. There will be a loss of 29 full time staff posts in the Museum Service. This is 20% of the staff.

The Restructuring Plan has been discussed at all levels of interest. It aims to maintain the central activities of **education exhibitions events advertising/marketing.**

In order to do this, the post of museum officer will go and the Service will be delivered centrally by four “chiefs”, each with a specialist responsibility. These responsibilities are to be :- ARTS SOCIAL HISTORY ARCHAEOLOGY NATURAL HISTORY.

The County will be divided into **zones**, each with a leader, leading a small team. **Gosport will be in SE Hants** along with Havant, Fareham and Eastleigh. Our staff, who we much appreciate, will be in the melting pot for jobs and we hope they will be successful. SEARCH, Gosport Gallery, Stored Collections and the storyboard “History of Gosport” in the Discovery Centre will remain. The difference will be how they are used. There will be reductions in available staff hours, but the idea is to achieve a balance of staff specialities within each zone. These people will rotate visits to local museums, so we should get experts in wider fields of knowledge e.g. we might have an archaeologist for 2 days in one week and a fine art specialist the next week. Advance advertising could bring real benefits for public access and use of the collections. As the plan evolves, a pattern to these visits may emerge and we will know when to catch the right person! We asked about the role of volunteers and working unsupervised. Nothing is yet decided.

The future change in “Renaissance” funding, nationally, is to develop CORE MUSEUMS . These will be few in number and must meet certain criteria :-

- serve a significant population
- have rich depth of “Designated Collections” i.e. designated as being very valuable but outside of the national collections
- redefine the aims of public use by developing, not just maintaining the status quo

It would be great if the Solent and Hampshire area could combine their resources to bid to become a core museum. This would defend the budgets. Thanks to our curator, Gosport is of particular interest because our Gallery is a Government Indemnified Space. This means it is insured nationally to hold valuable exhibits. Southampton Gallery is the other in this area, there are not many in the country.

At this date the Restructuring Plan is not finalised. It is doubtful that any major changes could be made. Janet and her team have endeavoured to maintain the essentials of the service and the hope is that we will be as creative and supportive as possible in our responses to the outcome.

A brief account of a rather idyllic BAFM Cconference at " SELBORNE"

Our S.E Western Counties meeting of British Association Friends of Museums was in a restored Field Studies BARN close by the famous Gilbert White House. It was miraculously DRY for my 4th visit, SO IT WAS MY FIRST PROPER WALK ROUND THE WHOLE GROUP OF FIELDS where Gilbert had planted his special garden beds.

"THE WAKES' (obsessively devoted) HEAD GARDENER, David Standing had given us a passionate Talk about the joy of restoring Gilbert's gardens. He has laid them all out AS NEAR AS POSSIBLE WITH THE SAME PLANTINGS THAT GILBERT REVELLED IN. It really felt like walking in the great pioneer's footsteps. It pleased me so much that my 90 year old legs were up to the walk across and round the five fields, as well as The Wakes afterwards with Rosemary Irwin & co.

Colin Grieg's presentation of the unique Pendon Museum at Abingdon could not have given more meticulous attention to such a purely imaginative concept, and then farewell discussions ended an idyllic day. It was completed by a lively ride home with dear Mary, but no concert this time. Joan Russell.

The Russell-Cotes Museum visit. 10th July 2010

When I was a child, we often went to Bournemouth for our holidays and looked forward to the great expanses of sand, shallow water for swimming and the intriguing animals created by oil lamps in the public gardens. On the first wet day we were taken to the Russell Cotes Museum, which we thought rather dull!. My second, recent visit with the Friends was a wonderful surprise.

The name comes from the founder of the museum, Sir Merton Russell Cotes, a successful Victorian hotelier who owned the prestigious Bath Hotel. His wealth enabled him to travel with his wife to the far corners of the world, by steam of course, to amongst other places, Russia, Japan, Australasia and N.America, collecting whatever took their interest. Numerous crates containing their finds were shipped back to England. He built a house on the plot adjoining the hotel, commissioning an amazing building that was to combine Scottish baronial with a touch of Italian Renaissance.(!!) to hold these artifacts. In time further galleries were added to house his growing Art and sculpture collection. Not only is the house and its collections of interest but the site Sir Merton had chosen is perfect for its east, south and western marvellous views across the bay from Hengistbury Head to the Isle of Purbeck and Studland Bay.

Inside there is all the comfort of Victorian wealth to see, the cloakroom was one to marvel at in these days of minimal design, plus the interest of its incredible range of collected treasures, well displayed, country by country.. Our party had varied interests, some particularly liked the rare china, others the folk material, others plumped for the effect of the whole, house and contents – though I suspect that the trio of youngsters might have sneaked off to enjoy what I too had more appreciated when their age. ...

Museum Officer's Report September 2010

Full **visitor figures** for the quarter: April – June saw the following visitors visit the sites:

Gosport Gallery:	2620	442 children in school groups
Local Studies:	3994	135 children in school groups
Museum on the Mezzanine:	11066	106 children in school groups
SEARCH:	3161	1478 children in school groups

Visitor figures so far for this quarter (July – August):

Gosport Gallery	8574	Local Studies	3300
Museum on the Mezzanine	9810	179 children in school groups	
SEARCH	1463	130 children in school groups	

66 Family/Community Workshops/Events/Talks July – August

- 13 July - Tea Dance in the Gallery (24 visitors)
- 15 July – Blackthorn Band Ceilidh in the Gallery (58 visitors)
- 17 July - Concert featuring a serenaded picnic with strawberries and punch (70 visitors)

- Creative Landscapes – series of workshops (final 2 held in July Artist in residence working with local people with disabilities to interpret Gosport Heritage through art and display for HOD's, 27 July (1 male, 5 female) 28 July (1 male, 6 female).
 - Sand Sculpting Workshops led by artists, museum staff' EDGE volunteers (413 visitors)
 - 16 family workshops and 4 open days at SEARCH
- 4 weeks of drop-in activities for families in the summer holiday, linked to Museum on the Mezzanine or Geology gallery

2 Gallery Exhibitions

- Music in the Gallery 10-17 July – 152 visitors attended a tea dance, ceilidh and concert
- Gosport Giant Interactive Sand Sculpture, 2-28 August
- **8378** visitors in four weeks (many new and many non traditional museum visitors)
- **41** workshops: 20 artist led 20 facilitator led (including by volunteers EDGE project)
413 (318 children & 95 adults) attended work
- Widespread media coverage including The News and the BBC Hampshire news website

4 new displays in DC museum cases

- Embroidery by Mrs Isabell Bourke in Pride of Place Case
- Rag rugs & button badges Ms Tricia Ross Pride of Place Case
- Archaeology display (Ithe Festival of British Archaeology)
- Darwin in Hampshire Hidden Treasures Case

25 enquiries, 9 identifications & 7 donations dealt with by the Museum Officers (June- August).

12 visitors to the Museum Corridor including those researching aspects of the collections. (June-August) 97 hours of work done by 12 volunteers (June-August) in the stored collections and at Gosport's Giant Interactive Sand Sculpture. Plus EDGE youth group meets once a week and other volunteers at SEARCH. Museums Service trainee, Lesley Denham, is continuing to digitise and catalogue the stored photographic collection. Alison Firth 14/09/2010 (Edited to fit space)

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 10th December for the Jan/Feb Newsletter, include details for events in early March 2011.

Friends of Gosport Museum web site at
www.friendsofgosportmuseum.org.uk

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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 Hampshire CC Museums Service or its staff.

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