

# FRIENDS OF GOSPORT MUSEUM

www.friendsofgosportmuseum.org.uk

## NEWSLETTER

JULY/AUGUST 2008

### Coach Visit to Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum Bournemouth

Saturday 13th Sept 2008

Book with Mary Duly

Or use the form from May's  
Newsletter.

Cost £11 per seat.

9 Pick-up Points around Gosport.

Friends of Gosport Museum  
Informal Coffee Morning  
In the Discovery Centre 10:30am  
Every 2nd Thursday of the month  
Meeting before next Newsletter  
Thursday 11th September 2008  
For around 1 hour meet at the Wings Café  
Informal meeting to discuss local heritage  
and perhaps extras such as gallery visits  
and opportunity to discover  
what is available at the Discovery Centre.

### Friends Membership Subscription Renewal

Thank you to all of you who have paid your 2008/09 subscription. I have been advised that some members believe the subscription is due for each year from the date your membership began. The subscription is due from the 1<sup>st</sup> April each year. If you wish to pay by standing order, please contact David Moore telephone: 023 9258 6575 17 Northcroft Road, Gosport, Hants PO12 3DR, otherwise send the subscription direct to the Membership Secretary Linda Hedley 7 Fairhome Close, Gosport, Hants PO12 4HZ.

### BAFM South East – Western Counties Area Conference Monday 8<sup>th</sup> September

Members have been invited to the conference which will be held at the Chiltern Open Air Museum, Newland Park, Gorelands Lane, Chalfont St Giles, Buckinghamshire, www.coam.org.uk . It is an all day event as well as a chance to go around the museum. The site includes the houses and workplaces of past generations that are disappearing every day from the landscape. In the Chilterns, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty on London's doorstep, the pressures are particularly great. Chiltern Open Air Museum preserves and interprets the built heritage of the Chilterns that would otherwise be lost. The Museum was founded in 1976, with the aim of rescuing threatened buildings and re-erecting them on a forty-five acre site of natural park, meadow and woodland, preserving a variety of structures of historical or vernacular interest which are typical of the region. If you would like to attend please contact a committee member before the end of July the fee is £12 for the day.

### Coach Visit to Russell-Cotes Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> September

A Grade II listed home with restored Victorian and Edwardian period rooms, once the home of the Russell-Cotes family, with art galleries and fascinating collections from their travels around the world. If you have not yet booked your place contact Mary Duly for details of any vacancies. Cost £11 per seat, pick-up from, Criterion, Bus Station, South Relief Rd (back of Waitrose), Anglesey Road (Bowling Club), Anglesey Cross Roads, Stokes Bay Road (opp. Elgar Close), Gomer Lane (end Western Way), FortBrockhurst, Fareham Road.

### Special Plea to OUR Members by Joan Russell

Summer Holiday Local History Quiz 25<sup>th</sup> July to 1<sup>st</sup> August collect from Discovery Centre. Please have a go.  
1) Museum on the Mezzanine; - 2) Look at Gosport Town; – Please say what you think of them.

## Discover the Museum in Gosport Discovery Centre

Dear Friends of Gosport Museum

I have been asked to write a piece about what Museum Services are provided in Gosport Discovery Centre. The establishment of Gosport Discovery Centre was a huge change and while many visitors love it, others are less comfortable.

I thought I would begin with a trip down Memory Lane and remind you about the days of the 'old Museum'. Many Gosport people had a great affection for the Museum in its lovely building at the top of the High Street – but there were many who did not venture over the threshold. Some of the FOGM have especially fond memories because they remember popping in and chatting with the small team of friendly Museum Assistants whom they all knew, and who went out of their way to be helpful.

However, change is inherent in everything. Some people complained when the coffee shop was set up in what is now the map part of Local Studies; some people complained when the space for community exhibitions was replaced with a huge wooden dresser containing files of photocopies of photographs and other information, much of it duplicated in the Library. These became much loved aspects of the Museum.

There is not really much point at looking back at the 'old museum' through rose tinted spectacles. In 2004, when serious work on the Discovery Centre began, the Local History displays were 12 years old and shabby; visitor figures were falling; the very popular Time Machine in the Geology display was on the verge of collapse; there were few school visits; there was no space for children's or family activities.

FOGM had their two lectures, AGM and Christmas Party in the Meeting Room at the end of the corridor on the first floor but some Friends had to give up attending meetings because of the stairs and the long walk along the corridor. This also made quite heavy demands on staff who set up and cleared the room and had to be available for Health and Safety reasons. Eventually the access issues meant that FOGM Committee meetings had to be held in the coffee shop as did the Christmas parties. Now, the FOGM are made welcome in the fully accessible Discovery Centre, committee meetings take place in the Conference Room, and SEARCH hosts the Christmas Party. There is space for the FOGM coffee mornings in the coffee shop.

There are many other improvements to Museum provision but it is necessary to consider a Community Museum as more than just Local History. Many of you visited HCCMAS headquarters at Chilcomb House last September and were very impressed with the collections of Archaeology, Natural Sciences, Costume & Textiles that you saw. There are many people in Gosport who have interests in these subject areas and it is part of the responsibility of HCCMAS to ensure that people in Gosport know what is available to them. We create knowledge about the wider collections of Hampshire through:

- the in-house exhibitions such as 'Invaders', or 'Cutting Edge' (last Autumn), which use Hampshire's collections
- the Hampshire Treasures showcase in the Discovery Centre. These are changed approximately monthly and in the last year have contained displays of fungi, 'ABC of Learning', insects, - and has just been changed by Alison Carter. You'll have to pop into the DC and find out what's in there now!
- the website
- the Geology display in Local Studies
- the Time Detectives display in the Museum on the Mezzanine

Gosport Museum in the Discovery Centre is the gateway to the collections of HCCMAS. Many enquiries for specialist keepers are sent to Museums Headquarters through Local Studies.

### **The Storyboat**

This is an innovative Museum display next to the Children's Library on the ground floor of the Discovery Centre. It contains Museum objects and is a base for activities. The mini-displays which comprise the Storyboat are frequently changed.

So what about the Local History?

- Now we have a new modern display in the Museum on the Mezzanine. Many visitors really like it while others do not. It contains many of the objects which were in the old display but also contains objects which were not. Some of the objects which were on display in the old Museum need conservation and some need to have a rest from exposure to light. It is the HCCMAS responsibility to take care of objects, especially those which have unique relevance to Gosport, so that they are available for future generations. The Discovery Centre has thousands of

- visitors so many people who would not have ventured into the 'old museum' have 'discovered' Gosport's history.
- The fantastic Fortress Gosport computer programme has made the complexities of Gosport's defences intelligible in a way that an information panel would not. This programme is unique and was created through some extremely generous resources from HCCMAS.
  - The children's interactives are popular but extensive use has made them a little worn so new ones will be devised when resources allow. The children who like to play in the Museum on the Mezzanine are more likely become the museum visitors of the future.
  - The Geology Gallery has been redisplayed. It has been recognised that this display needs more development and this is recognised as a priority when resources allow.

### **The Gosport Gallery**

Since 2002, the Gosport Gallery has been part of the HCCMAS exhibition circuit with a wide range of high quality exhibitions provided by the HCCMAS exhibition team. In 2005, grant funding from the Area Investment Fund enabled the building's security to be upgraded so that Gosport could receive British Museum exhibitions such as 'Across the Board' and 'The Greeks'.

### **Local Studies/Local History**

Local Studies is now housed in what was the 'old museum'. For some people, Local History IS Gosport Museum but as I have tried to explain above, the Museum is much much more.

In the days of the 'old museum', there was a) a huge duplication of some 2D local history materials in the museum and the library and b) some 2D materials were in the library and some were in the museum. This meant that customers had to go to two sites to find what they wanted- this could be a real pain! Now they are all in one place.

In the old museum if you wanted to look at a map, a Museum Assistant had to go to the first floor to find it, and then do a photocopy for which the customer had to sign a copyright form. Now it is much simpler. The Discovery Centre Assistants help the customer with the maps and the customer can do their own photocopying on the spot, subject to copyright restrictions.

A huge amount of Gosport material from Hampshire Records Office was specially digitised for the new Discovery Centre and is available on CDs in Local Studies. This material is all listed on the website. There are also computers in Local Studies which was not the case in the old museum; and there are large numbers of computers in the Discovery Centre main site. This is a fabulous resource for many of our visitors, including schoolchildren and other students.

The photocopies of photographs from the 'old museum' in the Museum on the Mezzanine allow visitors the choice of photocopying the images or ordering digital versions at a small charge. In the 'old museum', there was no photocopier in the public area so staff had to either risk leaving the museum or do it at a later time. There are also large numbers of photographs on the website and CDs containing all the images from the Museum on the Mezzanine displays are available in Local Studies

### **Access to the Collections**

What does this mean exactly in terms of Gosport?

The collections fall into several categories:

- 3D objects with a unique association with Gosport. Most of these are on display. Some are in reserve for displaying at a later date. Some are in need of conservation.
- 2D objects with a unique association with Gosport. These include the Martin Snape watercolours which are digitised on the website and which will be displayed in an exhibition in 2009. Watercolours are fragile and need to be carefully looked after.
- There is other 2D material which includes a small amount of material on a variety of topics. A summary of this material is available from Local Studies.
- 3D social history objects with no particular association with Gosport. Some of this material needs conservation.
- Geology stored collection which is accessible by arrangement,

One day a month has been set aside as a Collections Access Day for customers who wish to spend a period of time studying material. It is not possible to make unique material available in Local Studies unsupervised because the security is not adequate. All our store arrangements are in line with national guidelines. However, where possible, the customer's needs are met as soon as possible.

Between 2002 - 2004, 2 people requested to look at 'behind-the-scenes' material. They made the arrangement with the Curator and were supervised by a Museum Assistant. Between 2005-2008, 10-15 people approximately have been assisted in this way, either by the Senior Keeper Community Collections with or without a DCA depending on the request. This is

in addition to providing copies of photographs and other information. So access to the collections is not a reduced resource as some people may suggest. Anyone is welcome to contact me to find out more and I will do my best to help.

Communications are more complex within the Discovery Centre both for staff and customers. There are continuing efforts to improve this but I appreciate it is difficult for FOGM who were used to seeing the same smiley faces when they popped into either the museum or the library.

### Activity Programme

The FOGM only have to look in the Discovery Centre Events leaflet or the Museums 'What's on' to see what a fantastic range of activities are offered for all ages. The recent Insect Week activities, provided by HCCMAS, included a talk; insects in the Hampshire Treasures case (equivalent of 2 days work to prepare, install and take out); a creative insect family drop-in workshop; and a whole make and take series of activities for children based in the Museum on the Mezzanine.

Friends of Gosport  
Museum Committee

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*David Moore*  
023 9258 6575

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*Ian Jeffery*  
023 9252 3358

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*Joan Russell*  
023 9258 607

Committee Members

*Joan Adams*  
*Michael Adams*  
*Mary Colyer*  
*Mary Duly*  
*Michael Leopold*  
*Giselle Aynsworth*

The South-East Hampshire Education Officer is currently delivering hands-on seaside based activities for Key stage One (age 5-7) in the Museum on the Mezzanine, to link with the display. This is not something you would have seen in the 'old museum'!

### Outreach

The AIF grant which funded the improvements to the Gosport Gallery also funded an outreach worker for two years. Most of you have some idea of the work that Laura Weston did in the community over the last 2 years or so. She has worked with groups who had probably no idea that exhibitions, museum displays and the Discovery Centre in general were 'for them'. Her work has been able to guide us about some of the things we need to do in order to engage people in the wider community.

Museum services in Gosport are much wider and are reaching far more people than in the 'old days'. The way the services are delivered are different. For some people, this is much better; for others it is not. But you know the old saying about not being able to please all the people all the time! **Oonagh Palmer, July 2008**

### Some Meetings and Other Events That May be of Interest to Members

If you feel this section should not be in the Newsletter please let me know, or otherwise, if you come across other meetings or events that you feel may be of interest to other member, again just let me know.

12th July/ 9th August Fort Brockhurst Open Day

9th July/ 13th August Family History Society Meeting

18th July/ 15th August Gosport Railway Society Meeting

13th July Gosport's Big Day Out – free or discounted entry to attractions

If you have any information or photos that you think may be of interest to member of the Friends of Gosport Museum or others, please let me have them by post or email, details are below, by the 15th August for the September Newsletter.

Friends of Gosport Museum web site at [www.friendsofgosportmuseum.org.uk](http://www.friendsofgosportmuseum.org.uk).

Please send contributions for the Newsletter to  
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If you use email and 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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Membership of the Friends of Gosport Museum is  
open to all - Please contact any Committee member.  
Annual Subscription Individuals £5 Families £7.50

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