

FRIENDS OF GOSPORT MUSEUM

www.friendsofgosportmuseum.org.uk

NEWSLETTER

MARCH/APRIL 2009

AGM 22nd April 7:30pm

Gosport Discovery Centre

The Studio on the Mezzanine

Followed by a Talk by

Mary Tyrrell on the

War Memorial Hospital

Thorngate Halls – an amazing legacy

by Joan Russell

Wednesday 4th March 7:30pm

Gosport Discovery Centre

Tickets £3 Free Refreshment

Proceeds to Gosport Community Ass.

Friends of Gosport Museum

Informal Coffee Meeting

In the Discovery Centre 10:30am

Every 2nd Thursday of the month

Meetings before next Newsletter

Thursday 12th March 2009

Thursday 9th April 2009

Thursday 14th May 2009

For around 1 hour meet at the

Readers' Rest Café

Informal meeting to discuss local heritage

and perhaps extras such as gallery visits

and opportunities to discover

what is available at the Discovery Centre.

Items enclosed: AGM Nomination Form / Subscription Reminder

I have enclosed the nomination form for Friends of Gosport Museum officers and membership of the committee. The current officers and committee members have agreed to continue in their posts if that is the wish of the Friends of Gosport Museum membership. There is a vacancy for a Vice-Chairman and a committee member, so please think about joining the committee, if you unable to obtain a proposer and seconder, approach a member of the committee to do this for you. You must obtain the agreement of the person that you wish to nominate and return the form by 7th April.

I have also enclosed the 2009/10 subscription reminder form. All subscriptions are due on the 1st April and are the same as previous years, £5 single and £7.50 joint. Please send your payment to Linda Hedley, or if you wish to pay by standing order contact David Moore, full details on the enclosed forms.

Memories and Photos of Gosport Railway Station and Gosport Railways Wanted

The St Vincent Local History Luncheon Club has received a grant from the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Community Foundation, for a 2 to 3 year project to produce a DVD and book about Gosport Railway and the Station's past present and the future development of the Station site. The time-scale will depend on the time taken to develop the site. The projects name is 'Gosport's Railway Station: Its Story'. Any memories and photographs would be very welcome. You can contact me and I will pass your details to the members of the 'Railway Working Group'. My details are at the end of this newsletter. Ian Jeffery.

Scarf Left at Friends of Gosport Museum Christmas Party

The mauve scarf that was left at Christmas party has been passed on to me by Mary Duly, if I do not hear anything in the next couple of weeks I will leave it at the Discovery Centre. Ian Jeffery

Count Giorgio Des Geneys (1848-1891) by Mary Duly

Giorgio Emanuel Charles Augustus Des Geneys, to give him his full name!! Somehow one does not expect a member of the Italian aristocracy to live a great part of his life in Gosport, in the High Street, in fact, but this is what George (to anglicise his name) did. I was asked to research him by an Italian contact who was working for the larger family of which George was the last member of his particular branch. The information with which I started was that he died on 25th June 1891. The assumption from his nationality that he would be a Roman Catholic proved to be quite wrong. I found the following information in The Hampshire Chronicle of 4th July 1891. He asked to be interred in Ann's Hill Cemetery, the service to be performed by the Rev. W. Lee, Vicar of Holy Trinity. Further information was given of those attending and all were prominent masons, and that George had in fact founded the Prince of Wales Lodge, still in existence I believe. I found his grave in the eastern part of the cemetery and understood why he asked to be buried there, he was next to the grave of the couple, a Dr and Mrs James Alder with whom he had lodged, it seems since he arrived in Gosport, at 2 properties, Audrey House, 11 & 12 The High Street, now rebuilt after the war, and 99, Select dress shop until recently and a property showing signs of faded 19th C. grandeur (Dr Alder was Surgeon Major to Brigade Regiment, southern division and Medical Officer to the Alverstoke Urban Sanitary Board.) Dr Alder died in June 1888, before George, but George continued to lodge with Mrs Alder until his death. She died in Midlothian in 1893 but was buried with her husband in Gosport. George's body was exhumed in 1905, and taken back to Pinerolo in N. Italy, his family seat.

The Archivist of the Masonic Hall, Mr Steve Frost, has been most helpful. From him I gathered the earliest reference to George in Gosport, 1877 (he was 19), was given copies of documents with his signature, and saw his name inscribed on the Mason's honours boards. Free Masonry seems to have been his major interest. Everyone noted by the newspaper as attending his funeral was a prominent Mason. It is clear from his photograph in a booklet about his family that he was not robust, and his death certificate reveals that he died from kidney failure.

George's background is of interest. His mother, Emily Eleanor, was of an aristocratic British family, the Baillie-Hamiltons of Mellerstein in Berwickshire, a stately Adams house on the shores of the Firth of Forth. I knew that she married the Count George (Senr) in Florence and at first assumed she was doing the Grand Tour, then I discovered that her father's brother was Plenipotentiary (wonderful word) to the Duke of Tuscany – this was before Italian unification, another sister too was married in Florence to an Italian aristocrat – His Italian father was son of another George who was of real importance in Italian navy. He met Nelson in Sardinia to plan actions against Napoleon. This George's brothers all held high positions in Piedmont.

The family, widow, George and 3 sisters seem to have returned to England on the death of the father in 1864, no doubt seen as a sensible plan in view of the unsettled political situation developing in Italy – Garibaldi etc.!!

But why George came to Gosport I still do not know. I feel there must be some connection with the Alders. James, an Irishman, qualified in Edinburgh and Jane seems to have a close connection with the area around Mellerstein as she died in a village nearby..I wish I knew.!!

(I have deposited 2 booklets about the family, in the Discovery Centre) by Mary Duly

Radcliffe – a nurse looks back by Jean A.Hill

The three articles in this and future newsletters give a glimpse of my nursing career which began with training as a State Registered Nurse at the Radcliffe Infirmary Oxford 1945-48.

Twelve years old when war with Germany was declared in 1939, my teenage was blighted by clothing coupons, sweet rationing, blackout curtains, school as usual plus air raid shelters. Social activities curtailed and Grandma convinced that we must always whisper – 'for fear that German planes would hear us.'

'What do you want to do when you grow up?' My reply "I want to be a nurse." My interview with the matron of a large teaching hospital was a frighteningly fierce encounter. 'Why' she asked, 'did I wish to be a nurse?' I passed and arrived in Oxford May 19th 1945. Father put me on the train, making sure I was near a kindly lady. After all, I was only eighteen – imagine doing such a thing now.

Sixteen of us entered Preliminary Training School. Green as green could be, my baptism to adult life was of necessity rapid. After eight weeks, fourteen of us arrived at the Radcliffe in long green uniform dresses, black stockings and shoes, hair controlled beneath a white starched 1st year cap, and folder starched white apron, to be worn only on duty and removed before leaving the ward.

We had one day off plus half day Sunday. Two weeks annual holiday and £40 a year, but we were getting a training with board and lodging. We spent three months wherever posted, including night duty. This enabled our body clock to adapt from day to night but none of us accepted the midnight meal labelled dinner, which was immediately called 'elephant pie'.

With a shortage of nurses rooms, Somerville college became an annexe. No central heating, old sash windows with plenty of air was our misfortune in a very cold 1947. Without government surplus grey army blankets going cheap, and a willing hand to turn them into dressing gowns it's a wonder that we survived.

Nothing prepared us for a busy hospital changing from wartime priorities to a peace time routine. We could only imagine wave upon wave of wounded servicemen, every day a crisis, weary staff never giving in to daily exhaustion. Turning a hospital from war to peace became the matron's responsibility. She knew all her staff, from ward sister to probationer nurse, ward maids, cleaning staff and porters. She visited every single ward daily. Bust telegraph often coinciding with her arrival. Woe betide any nurse caught with the lunchtime ice cream bowl. Miss E G Preddy was stern, unrelenting in any lowering of standards or rules ignored. Once was enough. But no one fought harder for her nurses. In retirement many a laugh we shared at reunions.

Any war demands medical research. The greatest being penicillin to save countless war casualties from severe infected wounds. I was privileged and proud to nurse those servicemen from whom I learned much about the human spirit.

We made the most of our day off. The luxury of curling up in bed as others rushed past to breakfast. Being grateful. 'Here, nurse, I've saved this new laid egg specially for you.' The joy cycling beyond Oxford, an unknown freedom from today's traffic. No one could take leave over Christmas. We made a fuss of those patients too ill to go home and our special treat was Christmas dinner served by matron and ward sisters; followed by the Pantomime presented by the medical staff.

We worked hard but we laughed, we cried, and supported each other through many a crisis, some serious, some rebellious but sixty years on, several of us still meet. Our Alma Mater a precious memory. No longer bricks and mortar. All that remains is the 1770 original main entrance façade and Triton the Victorian fountain, for ever watering its lilies. Little could I realise until the day I left, just how highly regarded world wide the Radcliffe Infirmary was. Fourteen of us qualified SRN in June 1948, proud to gain our hospital bronze badge. Ours was one of the last Sets to complete training in a Voluntary hospital mainly supported by its citizens until the NHS took over in July 1948. By J A Hall

The three articles will be included in future Newsletters, other items still welcome. Ian Jeffery

Events Discovery Centre

4th March. Tales, Tepees and Totem Poles 2pm in Gosport Gallery for under 5's Free just drop in

4th March. The Thorngate Halls 7:30pm (see details above)

5th March. An Evening of poetry and music – Harry Haines 7:30pm. Tickets £1

7th March Last day of Myths and Legends in The Gosport Gallery

7th March Withdrawn library book sale in the Local Studies Centre 9am – 4:30pm

12th March The Hovercraft (50 years of) talk by Brian Russell, The Studio 7:30pm

19th March A Grand Irish Evening, with music by The McGinleys 7:30pm

23rd April Looking forward to Summer talk by Brian Kidd The Studio 7:30pm

Friends of Gosport
Museum Committee

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David Moore
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Joan Russell
023 9258 0072

Committee Members

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

I would like to say a big thank you to all of those who provided items for this Newsletter. If you or someone you know has not received this newsletter, but wish to receive future newsletters, please would they contact Linda Hedley 7 Fairhome Close, Gosport, Hants PO12 4HZ to confirm membership details. Ian Jeffery.

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

If you come across other meetings or events that you feel may be of interest to other member, just let me know.

From 10th January to 7th March Myths and Legends Exhibition Gosport Gallery

11th March HGS (Members Only) Alverstoke Parish Centre.
18th March Gosport Society 'Growing up in TurkTown'
20th March Gosport Railway Society, Methodist Church Hall
8th April HGS (Members Only) Alverstoke Parish Centre.
15th April Lee Horticultural Society Social Evening
17th April Gosport Railway Society, Methodist Church Hall

Committee Meeting 7th April 4:45pm Gosport Discovery Centre

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 17th April for the May/ June Newsletter.

The Newsletters are also being put on the Friends of Gosport Museum web site after they have been delivered, so you will be able to look back at them. I also hope to be able to put the past newsletters and membership form on the site.

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

Please send contributions for the Newsletter to
Ian Jeffery, FGM Newsletter Editor
11 Harcourt Road, PO12 3NR ian@gosport.info
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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