



Issue No. 3

GOSPORT RECORDS

**Gosport
Historic
Records
and
Museum
Society**



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Foreword

This is the third issue of the Gosport Records. It maintains the high standard of material and presentation we imposed on ourselves from the outset.

The character of Gosport is fast changing. New housing estates, new shopping centres are replacing the older premises, the fields, the farms and the areas of decay that once gave an impression of quiet Victorian repose and elegance. Many of the changes are improvements and they have given parts of the town a sense of modern bustling activity. But it is essential that the best of what was should be preserved, in records if not in physical premises. Some destruction over the last twenty-five years has been tragic - the loss of the Gosport Station (one of the finest in southern England), the loss of H.M.S. St. Vincent (coupled eternally with the Royal Marines), the loss of Clarence Square (19th Century elegance degraded to small factory development). All these are serious enough. The marvellous wild lands of Rowner have become a concrete jungle and the rich ploughlands of Lee are in process of being transferred to yet another housing estate.

We are desirous to see improvements in the borough, but we are also anxious to preserve what remains of quality and to ensure that the traditional dignity of the town is maintained.

Obviously the most available records of the past in this area come from Gosport and Alverstoke. We are anxious, however, to cover the whole area and detailed historic information about Brockhurst, Elson, Hardway, Bridgemary and other districts would be especially welcome.

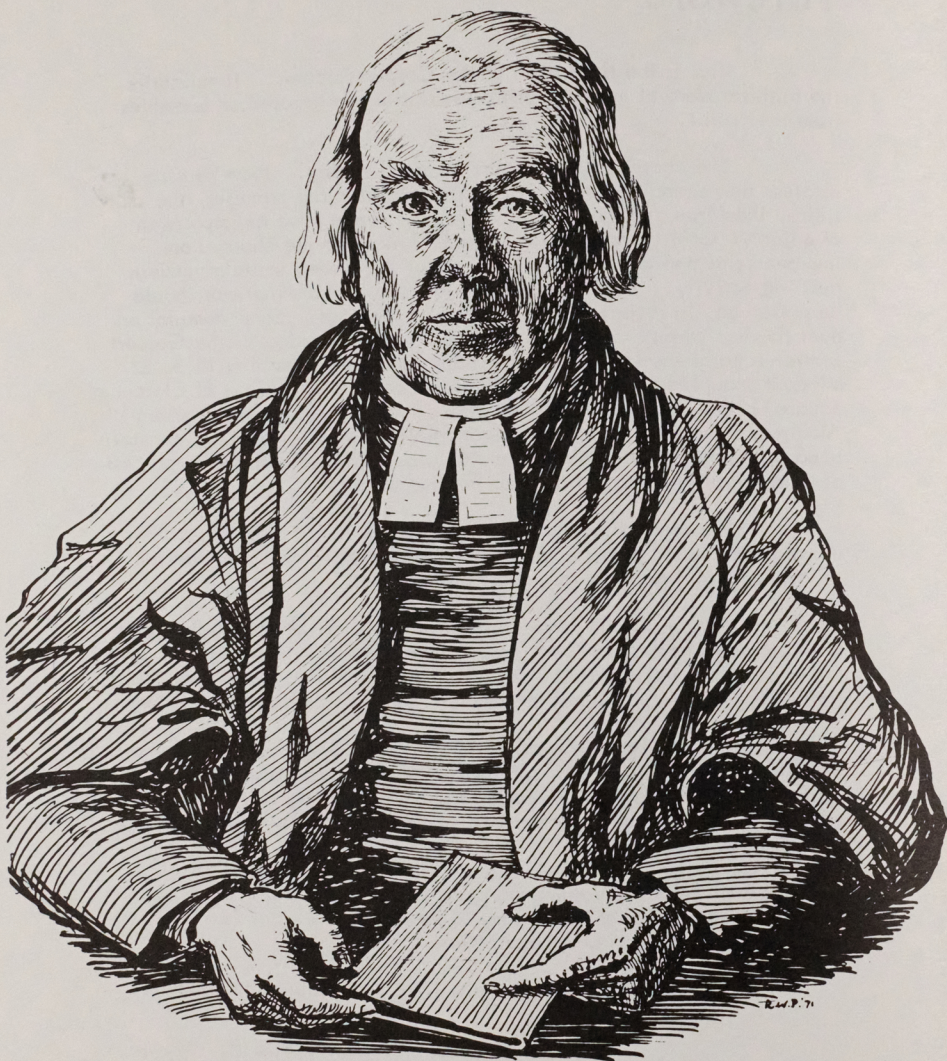
We are extremely grateful to the very large number of people who have joined the Society and for the lively interest shown in its activities. Membership has increased rapidly. Meetings have been well attended. The "Records" have received wide publicity and a very considerable distribution.

In this third volume we continue the policy of examining in detail various aspects of the history of the borough which, in 1972, celebrates its fifty years of incorporation.

We hope that this volume will be acceptable and popular.

Dr. L.F.W. White, M.B.E., B.Sc.
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Vice-Chairman,

Gosport Historic Records and Museum Society,

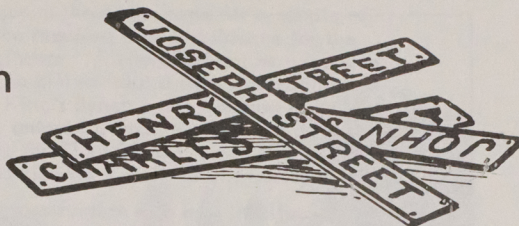


RICHARD BINGHAM. Saint or Sinner? In his article on Page 5 the Reverend John Capper endeavours to assess this very complex cleric. This pen and ink drawing by Rear Admiral Paffard was taken from the only known picture of Bingham which is too faded to reproduce.

Richard Bingham

by

Reverend John R. Capper



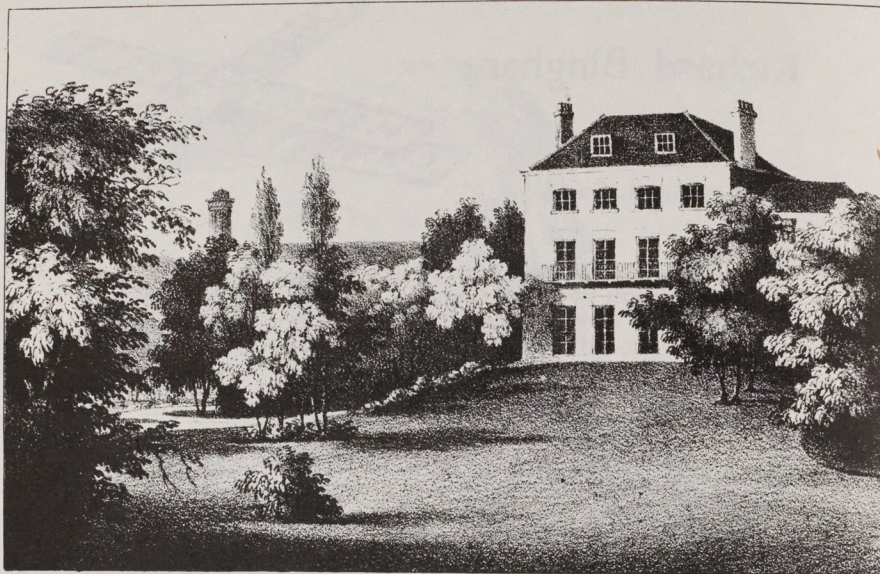
His first ten years at Holy Trinity, Gosport, were obscure ; his last ten years were even more insignificant. In between there spanned half a Century of aggressive action in the affairs of the Church and the Borough which earned him fame and infamy, locally and nationally. In his own day he had many supporters and adversaries even now it is difficult to form a balanced unbiassed appraisal of this involved cleric.

Appropriately he was born on All Fools Day 1765. When Richard was 14, the family moved to Gosport on the appointment of his father, the Rev. Isaac Moody Bingham to the living of Holy Trinity. He was educated at Winchester College, then graduated at New College, Oxford. He subsequently obtained a further degree in Civil Law.

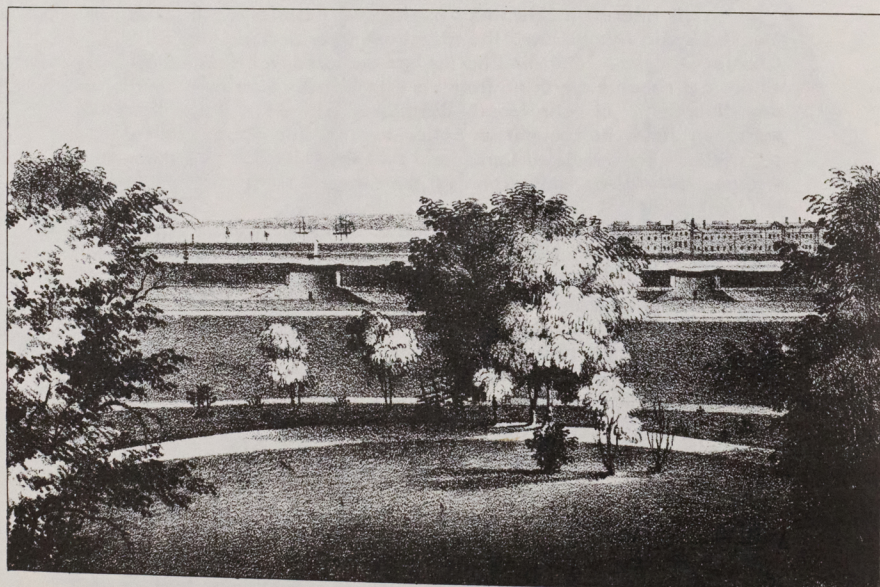
His interest in law helps explain his notoriety. In 1788, he married Lydia Mary Anne, the eldest daughter of Rear Admiral Sir Charles Douglas. But Sir Charles had declared in his will that Lydia would not receive anything from his estate if she married Richard, or any other son, of John Moody Bingham. Since Richard's father was Isaac not John, he brought an action to have this clause in the will set aside. The House of Lords held that the intention of Sir Charles was perfectly clear, and dismissed the claim.

Richard Bingham was licensed as perpetual Curate of Holy Trinity on the 16th August 1792. In these early years he was overshadowed by his father who continued to minister in the church and took precedence over his son at vestry meetings. The father died in 1807 "Beloved, Honoured and Lamented by all who knew the Goodness and Integrity of his Heart", as the memorial plaque still proclaims in the church.

Richard must have been a wealthy man, even before his father died, although his stipend was only £100 a year. He was also a great builder. In 1795 he persuaded Bishop Brownlow North, who was lord of the manor of Gosport, to grant him that part of his demesne lands which stretched from the chapel wall to the waterside. He raised by subscription £480 towards the building of his vicarage on this site, and spent a further £5,500 of his own money on its completion. The house itself (the present vicarage) comprises five storeys, built of peat-cooked bricks from Colden Common.



View of Church House



View from Church House

The Bingham family only enjoyed their new home for a couple of years. The Board of Ordnance required it as a residence for the Commandant of the Royal Engineers. Richard did not acquiesce in the requirements of the Defence Bill without a fight and confronted the Board in the Court of the King's Bench. He claimed to have won his case, but straightway entered into agreement with the Army. He sold his interest in the land for £15,000 and leased the house for £100 a year, thus making a considerable profit on his outlay.

At once he began the construction of a new dwelling as a vicarage. This house was at the east end of the church and remained the vicarage until 1858.* There were supposed to have been underground tunnels which Bingham used for smuggling and to avoid his creditors. They were more probably wine cellars or drainage channels.

In the early 19th century, Bingham's influence in Gosport was very considerable. The Bishop, as lord of the manor and Borough of Gosport, appointed him as his bailiff. The duties involved collecting the lord's rent and revenue, summoning the Juries and Homage to attend the court leet and court baron, and attending this court himself. A possible reason for Bingham's appointment was that the collection of Quit Rents due to the Bishop had been neglected, and thus lost to him.

However, the Jury and Homage assembled at these courts claimed that it was their privilege to choose the bailiff. So in 1800 they chose Robert Forbes, and proceedings in the nature of Quo Warranto were begun to decide the issue. This was a writ by which the king called upon any person to show by what authority he claimed to be entitled to an official position. Initially the case went against Bingham, but as the records of the court leet and court baron recorded him as being bailiff of Gosport from 1803 till 1850 when the court book ends, there must have been some kind of judgment in his favour.

He was not so fortunate in his next legal case. The Vestry Book of Holy Trinity Church, 1730 - 1825, records the annual vestry held every year during this period except for 1814. In that year Bingham spent Easter in the county gaol at Winchester, serving a six months sentence. In 1813, being a magistrate of Hampshire of twelve years standing, he was convicted at the Winchester Summer Assizes of having illegally obtained a licence for a public-house, when no such public house was in existence, and of having stated in the conveyance of such house a false consideration of the same, with intent to defraud the revenue by evading an additional stamp duty of £10.

* After Bingham's death, Stanley House as it was renamed, became the home of Mr. Benjamin Nicholson head of the famous firm of yacht builders and father of Charles Nicholson Gosport's first Honorary Freeman. Better known to many residents in later years as 'The Hall Guest House' it finished up as temporary offices for the Borough Engineer's Department, and was demolished a few years ago.

The circumstances indicate that Bingham had owned the Revolutionaire and the Audacious public-houses in Beach Street - until they were pulled down in 1803 to improve the defences. The prosecution alleged that he used his position as a Licensing Justice to traffic in the sale of a Licence, and that he defrauded the Government of stamp duty by not disclosing the full amount paid in a property transaction.

In 1810 he was supposed to have bought two houses for £700 and sold them to a James Cooper for £2,200 on the understanding that the licences of the Revolutionaire and the Audacious were transferred to this property. Furthermore, he caused the sum of £1,900 to be inserted in the conveyance, thus evading £10 stamp duty. At the trial Bingham denied the charges and claimed that two of his fellow magistrates conspired against him, since they were brewers, and the granting of the licences was against their interests.

No sooner was he back in his vicarage at Gosport than further legal problems claimed his attention. The trouble was that David Compigné, also a lawyer, refused to pay his annual pew rent. The annual vestry had been accustomed to levying a rate on the pews occupied in the church - usually a shilling in the pound - and this was the main source of income for the upkeep of the fabric of the church. The Court of Arches declared that there was no legal method of making and levying rates for the repairs, support and incidental expenses of the church, so an Act of Parliament in 1825 made provision for its perpetual maintenance and support.

At this time the population of the parish, conterminous with the town of Gosport, was just under 7,000. The notoriety of Bingham's legal disputes unfortunately overshadows the busy routine of his conscientious work as a parish priest. For over 20 years his son Richard assisted him as a Curate. There were three full services in the church every Sunday, and another service with a sermon on Wednesday evening. The records indicate packed congregations. A contemporary described him as a fluent and lucid expounder of scriptural doctrines.

Bingham played a large part in the development of what is now the Newtown area of the Borough. In the 19th Century it was called Bingham Town and some of the streets were named after his sons - Joseph, Henry, John and Charles. He also added to the Peachy almshouses in Cross Street and regularly assisted the poor of the Borough with gifts in kind and money.

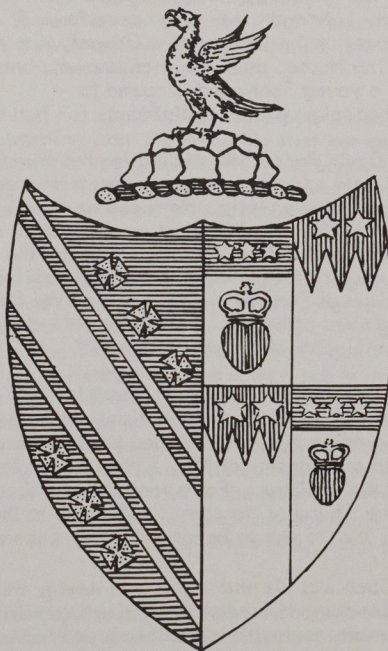
Bingham held other clerical appointments outside Gosport. From 1796 he was vicar of Hale Magna in Lincolnshire, and from 1807 he was a Canon of Chichester, occupying the prebendary stall of Bargham. But it was at Gosport that he spent most of his time and his money.

By 1847 he claimed he was utterly unable to pay the £600 costs of a case against him in the High Court of Chancery referring to the charity almshouses. He remained at Holy Trinity until his death on the 24th July 1858, at the advanced age of 94. For a priest to serve 66 years without a break in one parish must be a national record.

During his last decade in the parish he was so prostrated by bodily illness that he was unable to discharge many of the public functions of his office. The last service he conducted in the church was six years before his death. By some apparently unaccountable error he gave the blessing about half way through the Communion Service and the congregation dispersed in confusion.

The Bingham family motto was "Spes mea Christus" - Christ, my hope. Richard's evident Christian conviction and concern for the affairs of the church and the Borough were of tremendous significance in the rapidly developing Gosport of the early 19th Century. His calm exterior betrayed a fighting spirit for any cause he considered important. His failure was his lack of money and humility which prevented him from resigning the living of the Holy Trinity when his advancing age and infirmity demanded it.

The Arms of
Richard Bingham



Historic Homes

No. 5, High Street

by J. Llewellyn, B.A.

On the wall of the very modern premises of the National Westminster Bank, opposite the Town Hall, a plaque reminds both customers and passers-by of the historic old house which stood there until 1966. Dates do not mean much to most people so suffice it to say that No. 5 High Street was built in the time of Charles II and survived 300 years and fifteen reigns almost until the present day.

In the 17th Century the main road into Gosport was through North Street and this comfortable but modest old house was in a rather pleasant backwater overlooking a meadow. In 1700 it was purchased by a wealthy lady and given as a manse for the minister of the Independent Chapel, or Meeting House, as it was then known. In 1777 a young Scot aged 27 came to Gosport to take up the appointment.

David Bogue had studied for the ministry at Edinburgh University and had held educational appointments at academies in Edmonton, Hampstead, and Camberwell. He faced an uphill task. According to his friend James Bennett "Gosport contains 5000 inhabitants and can boast little that is attractive ; for the place has the narrowness and slander of a small country town, without its rural simplicity, and with a full share of the vices of Portsmouth, polluted by the fortunes of sailors, and the extravagances of harlots. To these evils are added the petty pride and sectarian bigotry of a fortified town."

Not deterred Bogue set about his task with zeal and soon his preachings drew large congregations not only from local people but from the surrounding districts. Aided by a London banker, George Welch, he began an academy at No. 5 High Street for the training of young men for the ministry. For a long time he dreamed of concerted action by all the Churches 'to carry the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the Earth.' No. 5 was to become the spring-board of that dream.

Such was his enthusiasm and energy that by 1794 meetings were held in London and leaders of all Christian denominations working in close harmony and with incredible speed formed the London Missionary Society and decided on a first expedition to Tahiti in the South Seas.



Why Tahiti was chosen is not quite clear but the story of the mutiny on the Bounty which had sailed from the harbour for the same destination a few years earlier was still fresh in men's minds and this may have had something to do with the choice.

It was a very different man to Captain Bligh who took command of one of the strangest ships ever to anchor in Portsmouth Harbour and await a convoy, needed to afford protection from the French.

The Captain was James Wilson, of Horndean, whose conversion to Christianity had been effected by the Rev. John Griffin at Orange Street Chapel, Portsea. Under his care, in the "Duff" went thirty Missionaries, mostly tradesmen, led by four ordained Ministers. Even the crew were mostly church members. So different was their behaviour from that of a normal ship's company in port that the locals on Gosport beach became quite excited at the novelty. They nicknamed the ship 'The Ten Commandments.' She finally sailed in September 1796 and arrived in Tahiti in March 1797.

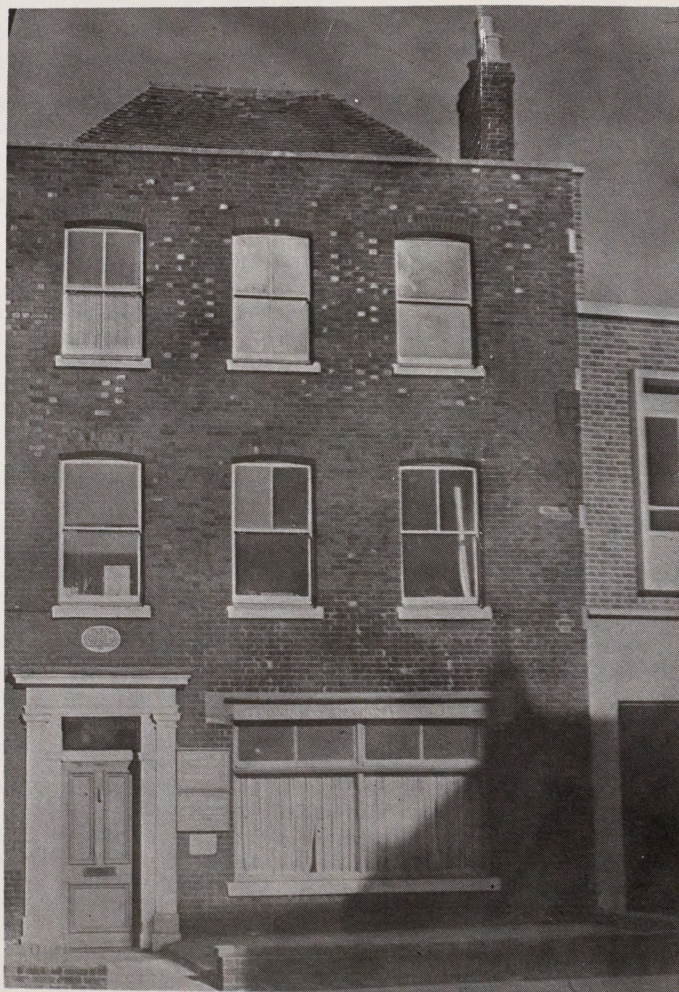
Returning safely in 1798 a second expedition was planned. While the "Duff" lay in harbour David Bogue went on board and preached to the ship's company. He issued a warning "Some will tell you that you are in no danger of shipwreck because you carry Christ and his Gospel" but reminded them of the fate of Paul, the greatest missionary of all. His words were to come true. Some sixty days out the "Duff" was attacked by pirates and although the crew fought well they were eventually overcome. Some were killed and others held to ransom.

It seemed as if God had not approved of those who set out, and the disaster was taken as a warning from the Almighty that not enough care and preparation had gone into the expedition. The London Missionary Society decided that better training for its mission workers was necessary and resolved that Dr. Bogue of Gosport be invited to undertake the office of Tutor.

So began in the year 1800 at No. 5 High Street, Gosport, the training of a succession of young men whose names were later to dominate the early history of the spread of Christianity to all parts of the globe - David Jones in Madagascar, Charles Mead in India, Carl Pecalt in South Africa and many others. Few colleges have had such a noble line of students as this homely academy. The trainees lived in lodgings in the town, but their private lives were subject to strict supervision. Attachments to local young ladies were forbidden "unless by explicit approbation of the Director" as these "might arouse expectation of marriage". How many fell by the wayside is not recorded, but as the students were only allowed two guineas per annum pocket money probably not many. Board, lodging and tuition, paid for out of Society funds, came to £35 a year.

From this small beginning the great Missionary Society has now for nearly 200 years worked in almost every country in the world thanks to men like David Livingstone, John Williams, and initially David Bogue of Gosport.

In the 1920's the old house, now in one of the busiest parts of the town was used as an office by the Weights and Measures Inspector, and in later years it became the local branch of the Ministry of Health and Pensions. By 1966 it was a crumbling shell. It had been there before Marlborough fought the battle of Blenheim, it had outlived Hitler and his bombs, but in the end it had to come down to make way for the needs of the modern world.



No. 5, High Street, before it was pulled down

Gosport's Lost Theatres

by H. T. Rogers

"He was cheerful in society - as an instance of which when at a party at Sir Samuel Marshall's at Bury House, and weather interfered with their amusements, he took a chaise and drove into Gosport to seek for a fiddler, and received a warm welcome from the young ladies on his return." Thus an old letter describes William Hollis born in Gosport 1725.

My guess is that he drove either to the India Arms Hotel or the Star Inn, (now much altered but still on the same site), as these were the leading Coaching Houses of the time and where he was most likely to pick up a musician.

It is interesting today to set out on the same route from Bury House, now a Community Centre, and seek out earlier centres of entertainment.

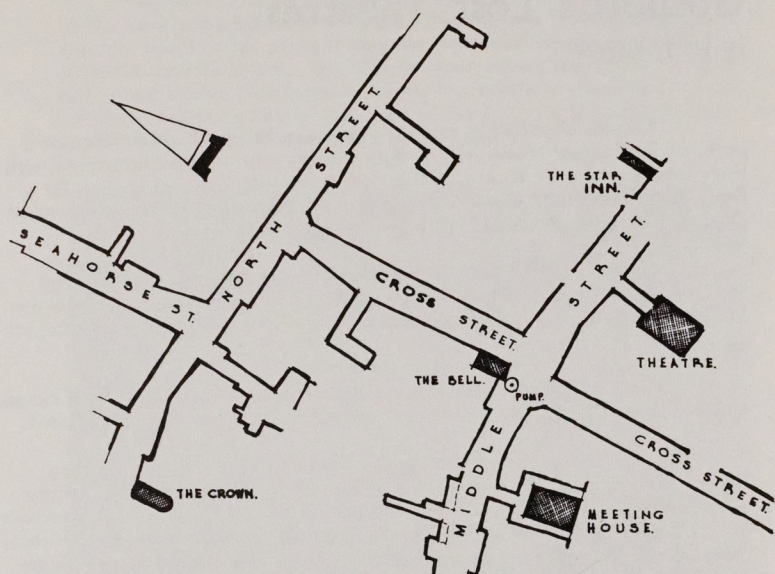
A good deal of imagination is required to reconstruct the long line of alehouses which spread along Gosport Beach in the 18th Century or the fairs which were held twice a year on Gosport Green at the harbour end of North Street and which were eventually shut down owing to riotous behaviour. A modern restaurant now stands on the once notorious Rimes Alley which had iron gates at each end to keep out the press gang, and which was famous among seamen the world over.

Alongside was the King's Arms Tavern, the Landlord of which was a Mr. R: Rimes who gave his name to the alley. In later years when it became more respectable the name was changed to King's Arms Passage. Hereabouts also is reputed to have been the first Gosport Theatre which was run by Mr. Collins who managed the theatre in Portsmouth.

I have been unable to trace the exact site of this theatre but further up the High Street, or Middle Street as it was then known, we are more fortunate.

Stand outside the Midland Bank and look across to Hepworth's and Findlay's premises. If you glance up at the first and second floors you will note evidence of what was once a very fine house. A central arch in this building gave access to one of the earliest theatres in the town. It was opened in 1796 by a Mr. Thornton formerly prompter to the theatre in High Street, Portsmouth. Reputed to seat 800 people it flourished until 1827 when it became a chapel.

In 1806 when a comedy entitled 'A Bold Stroke for a Husband' was being performed, a local critic whom I suspect had a share in the venture stated "the theatre is not excelled by any provincial building. The selection of pieces and the excellences of the performers is exceeded by none." It is now a store for Timothy Whites Ltd., and by courtesy of the manager I was able to see what is left of the old building. Little remains but it is still possible to see the old box office just inside the entrance.



Gosport before 1812 based on an Old Map



Old Congregational Sunday School formerly a Theatre

Thornton, who also ran theatres in Windsor and Arundel, had previously played a season with his own company in Gosport in 1791. Probably this was at another theatre which stood on the site of the present Post Office. It was demolished in 1794 to make way for the Independent Meeting House, later the Congregational Chapel which was destroyed in the last war.

Competition among theatre managers was fierce especially from Portsmouth as touring companies saw a chance of playing in Gosport on off nights without incurring much expense. In 1783 Mr. Wheeler of the Portsmouth Theatre met with some misfortune. He agreed with the landlord of the India Arms to build a theatre on a vacant spot in his yard at a nominal rent of £5 a year as it was thought it would bring much profit to the inn. After Wheeler had spent some £500 it was found that the ground was mortgaged and nothing could be removed. Described as an "elegant little theatre" it did not survive long although leading artists from London who were playing in Portsmouth would appear. Occasionally the ferry was impossible and the actors had to drive round by land by post-chaise.

Walk up past the Town Hall and turn right into the car park in Ordnance Row. Now that a lot of old property has been cleared away there is a splendid view of the back of the old Crown Hotel once a most fashionable tavern and the first at which the traveller would arrive on passing through the ramparts. Here the more intellectual section of the community would gather in the Assembly Room on the first floor - now a store but still much as it was - while their carriages waited in the yard below.

It is amusing to note from the old Concert Bill which we publish that attention is drawn to the fact that "There will be a Full Moon".* Evidently our ancestors were not happy at being out in the unlit streets of Gosport after dark, probably with good reason.

The last live professional theatre in Gosport was opened in 1924 by Mr. J. Grant Anderson with a resident Stock Company presenting a new play each week. The building stood on the south side of High Street and had started life as a chapel being turned into a cinema just before the 1914/18 war. The entrance over which there was a canopy is now a radio shop, Rumbelows Ltd., and these premises formed a kind of foyer to the theatre which stood behind the shops.

Mr. Anderson still on the stage and making occasional visits to the Kings Theatre at Southsea tells me that Gosport was his first venture into production after leaving the Prince's Theatre in Lake Road, Portsmouth. Mr. Laurie Upton who was with the Company remembers the difficulties they faced. The scenic artist had to paint each week's scenery on its side as there was no room at the rear of the stage and the passage at the side of the building had to be used as a paint shop.

After Grant Anderson left Gosport the cinema became a Music Hall for a brief spell and then reverted to a cinema. The old Thorngate Hall, where the Council Chamber now stands, was the main centre for amateur productions and official civic functions.

* See Page 17.

Returning along Stoke Road we should remember the great pageants held in the grounds of Grove House before the first world war which drew crowds surprisingly large in this more sophisticated age. In those days these grounds extended from Stoke Road to the railway and from Avenue Road to Spring Garden Lane. Peel Road was a cul-de-sac and Grove Avenue had yet to be built. A large arena or stage covered the full length of what is now Strathmore Road and the caste numbered several hundreds. Canvas scenery on a massive scale represented castles and shops. Music was supplied by the Band of the Royal Marine Light Infantry from Forton Barracks and performances were given on several days. Bearing in mind the total population there must have been few who did not take part either as players, stage-hands, or audience.

The proceeds of these pageants were used to help build and maintain Christ Church Institute in Avenue Road, another popular centre for amateur actors. A short distance away on the site of Avenue Chambers stood the Picturedrome, one of the earliest if not the first cinema in Gosport. Here for one penny could be seen Miss Pearl White in the "Perils of Pauline" which used to cut out at the most thrilling moment with the announcement 'To be continued next week'. Irreverently known as the 'Tin Tabernacle' it was constructed of wood and corrugated iron and I doubt if it would have passed today's planning regulations. Eventually it went up in flames.

The Olympia on the corner of Queens Road and Stoke Road was opened as a Skating Rink in the early 1920's. It became in turn a Music Hall but finally turned over to films. For some years it was very popular.

Before we return to Bury House we must not forget Lee-on-the-Solent. In 1911 some pierrots earned a hazardous living giving shows in the bandstand on the pier. A young schoolboy on holiday at Hillhead was allowed to take part. One wonders if the audience, sunning themselves in deck-chairs, spotted any latent talent. They might well have done; it was Noel Coward.



One of the Grove Pageants

Gosport Public Concert.

For the BENEFIT of
Miss GILL, Mr. FRENCH, 2d Violin, &c.

At the CROWN Inn, *Gosport*,
On *Wednesday* the 28th of *February*, 1787, will be presented
A CONCERT
Of Vocal & Instrumental Music.

ACT I.

OVERTURE—BACH.
A favourite CANTATA—*Male Coquet*—Miss GILL.
OVERTURE—*Lady of the Manor*.
A favourite SONG—Mr. LUCAS.
OVERTURE—Lord KELLY.

ACT II.

OVERTURE—ABEL.
A favourite CANTATA—*Midst silent Shades*—Miss GILL.
SOLO by Mr. FRENCH.
SONG by a GENTLEMAN.
OVERTURE to SAMSON—HANDEL.

After the Concert will be a BALL.

Tickets to be had of Miss GILL, *St. George's Square*; Mr. FRENCH, *Portsmouth Common*;
Mr. SLIGHT, *Golden Lion-lane*, and Mr. HOFFMEISTER, *Marquis of Granby, Portsmouth*;
Mr. HARDING and Mr. WATTS, Bookfellers, and Mr. CREASE, *Crown Inn, Gosport*.

It will be FULL MOON.

Photograph of Old Concert Bill

Haslar's Historic Ship Tank

by Lesley Burton

The year 1972 marks the centenary of the world's first ship testing tank for model experiments. The man whose name is honoured by generations of naval architects is William Froude, and visible and tangible evidence of his work still stands on Haslar Creek amongst the complex of anonymous looking buildings which comprise the Admiralty Experiment Works.

The old ship tank at Haslar is Gosport's working memorial to this distinguished Victorian engineer and man of ideas and to his son Robert Edmund Froude who lived a great part of his working life at Alverstoke. William Froude was born in Devon in 1810 and had a boyhood passion for the sea and ships which continued unabated into adult life. Although Oxford-educated with a degree in Classics, he went to work as an engineer with the great Isambard Kingdom Brunel on the GWR project.

During the 1850's, Froude began conducting resistance experiments with small model boats in the River Dart. The considered opinion of the local worthies was that he was a lunatic. Froude however was quite undeterred and devised for the experiments the most delicate recording apparatus fashioned out of tin and solder. This is now preserved in the Science Museum at Kensington.

Before long Froude became fired with a determination to build his own testing tank where he could work undisturbed by both the elements and remarks from uncomprehending spectators. Some-time during the 1860's he had acquired some ground at Torquay and erected a house known as Chelston Cross. Froude drew his work on models to the attention of Sir Edward Reed, Chief Constructor to the Navy, and through the latter's enthusiastic support, was given an Admiralty grant of £2,000 for two years - pin money by today's standards - to cover the building of a tank adjacent to Chelston Cross the day-to-day running costs of the installation and a small salary to his third son and chief assistant, Robert Edmund Froude.

William himself refused to be paid a salary. He had been very distressed at the loss of life in a naval disaster of August 1871. The "CAPTAIN" a large twin-screw iron clad whose many faults of design included a very small freeboard, had turned turtle in the Bay of Biscay. Almost the entire crew of 500 was drowned. It was with this tragedy fresh in his mind that Froude foresaw the possibility of eliminating design faults at the experimental stage by the simple expedient of submitting accurate scale models to rigorous tests.

So it was that the year 1871 - 72 saw the turning point in the history of ship model research. During the 1870's William Froude's name and work became famous throughout Europe. He published regular papers on his model experiments in both the Institute of Naval Architects and the Royal Society and lectured widely. In 1879, whilst on holiday in Capetown he died of enteric fever. Back at Torquay, the work went on until by the 1880's it was evident that the Torquay site and installation was too small to accommodate the increasing complexity of work.

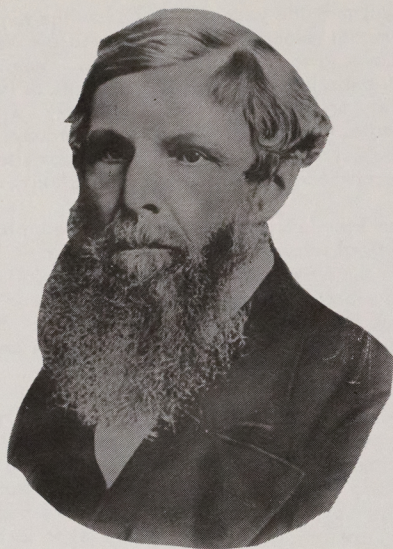
William Froude's understudy now stepped into the limelight in the shape of his third son Robert Edmund. He had worked very closely with his father from their earliest pioneering experiments. Whilst not holding his father's specialist knowledge, Robert Edmund did have the useful faculty of deducing results from given material. Possessed of an analytical mind he was also an excellent administrator and could always call on a loyal staff.

The transfer to the new site at Haslar was a major disruption. Haslar in 1886 was much the same quiet backwater that it is today. The Adnams brothers farmed in Clayhall Road and most of the area between Gunboat Yard and the creek was grazing ground. It was rough and, in winter marshy. The Commissioners for the Admiralty had purchased the land in the mid-eighteenth century which they let to local farmers.

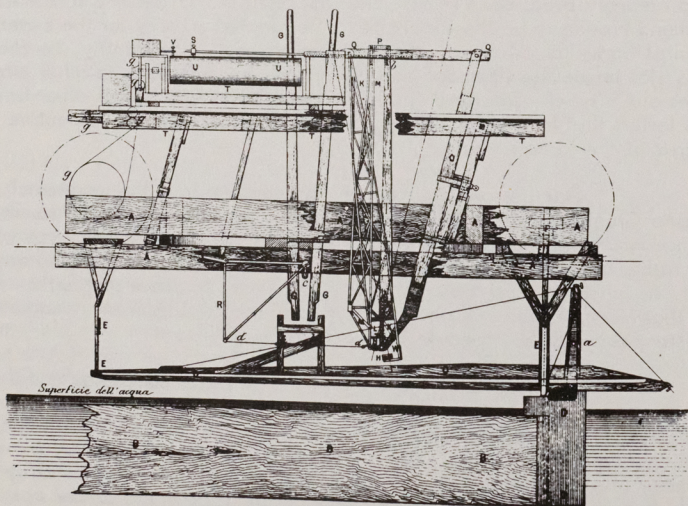
La Favelure's map of Gosport dated 1600 shows the whole of the area formed by Haslar Creek as the Alverstoke Marshes. Haslar had clearly always been remote and inaccessible. It seemed to Robert Edmund Froude to be the ideal site. He fancied privacy for the experimental work, far away from the madding crowd. Accordingly, he chose this plot inside the Gunboat Yard Compound in preference to other proposed sites at Chiswick, Deptford and Portsmouth Dockyards. It is clear from his letters that he had been very carefully mulling over the respective merits of the three sites.

One person who tried to dissuade him from the marshes of Haslar Creek was his life-long friend Henry Marc Brunel, son of Isambard Kingdom Brunel. Wrote Henry in 1882, "I think that at Haslar you will be rather out of the way in a while. You will not, when going in and out, or lunching, see and be seen." They were to prove prophetic words in that much of the work and importance of the Establishment remained a mystery even to those people living cheek by jowl to it.

Early in 1886, the work on the tank was completed and the great and complicated transfer from Torquay took place. "I hear", wrote a friend, "that you are in the agonies of a removal to Haslar. I hope the change may be a great gain to you." There were, however, a number of small irritations which combined to exasperate the normally mild tempered Froude. Pickfords wagons got stuck in the Haslar mud and extra horses were needed to pull the heavy loads of equipment through the entrance gate.



William Froude,
M.A., F.R.S.



Schematic drawing showing the working of the dynamometer. An illustration from a 100 year old Italian book describing the pioneering work of the two Froudes.

Next there was the difficulty of actually getting water into the tank. Great cracks and fissures began appearing in the surface of the cemented bottom. They were the result of severe frosts during the winter of 1885/6. The heating system was inadequate. Admiralty rules were that all coal fires had to be extinguished as a fire precaution when the building closed at 5 p.m. "It is such a pity", wrote Henry Brunel to Robert Edmund Froude, with a touch of humorous sarcasm, "that we cannot have the whole tank on trunnions so that if it caught fire we could turn it upside down."

Eventually, after repeated supplications to Portsmouth Dockyard, Froude got permission for a member of staff to enter the tank building once or twice during the night to stoke up the boiler. This solved the problem of the cracks, for the bottom of the tank was soon smooth and watertight enough to allow Mr. Horatio Compigné, Clerk of the Gosport Water Company, to sanction the flow of nearly half a million gallons required to fill the 400 feet long, 20 feet wide and 9 feet deep tank.

Froude and his staff settled into their cosy offices. The accommodation, although small was very comfortably furnished, even opulent by today's rather functional standards. Fine Brussels carpets, solid mahogany furniture, cane-bottomed chairs and a sofa. Froude's chief assistant and Jack-of-all-Trades was a young man called Benjamin A. Kent. He combined the duties of clerk, secretary and draughtsman. Much later in 1927 he was to become Mayor of Gosport and had the no doubt piquant experience of paying an official visit to his old place of work.

On joining Haslar from Torquay, Froude moved into No. 1 Little Anglesey Road, overlooking Alverstoke Creek, but later he moved to the more spacious address of North Lodge, at the junction of Green Road and The Avenue. He is still remembered by some of Alverstoke's oldest inhabitants as a quiet-self-effacing man with a great love of yachting and a fondness for choral singing, in which he was coached by his friend Joseph Alfred Novello of the music publishing firm.

The eminence of William Froude as an engineer had been universally acknowledged during his lifetime, and after his father's death, Robert Edmund Froude received world wide requests for advice on the building of ship testing tanks similar in all respects to the one at Haslar.

The apparatus first devised by William and Robert Edmund Froude over a hundred years ago has changed very little in principle. A carriage runs over and along the sides of the tank on rails which have been specially aligned to take into account the curvature of the earth's surface. This mobile carriage is equipped with a dynamometer, beneath which is suspended the scale model. The whole purpose of this ingenious device is to record the speed, performance and resistance of the ship model in still water as well as its motion in waves, which can be artificially induced with a wavemaking machine.

The models are moulded from paraffin wax, although nowadays fibreglass is increasingly used. Each model measures up to 20 feet in length, is 2 feet wide and of about 1 inch thickness.

In 1886, R. E. Froude answered one correspondent's query as follows :-

1. The melting box holds 600 lb melted paraffin.
2. It takes $1\frac{1}{2}$ - $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours to melt 600 lb of wax.
3. The solid paraffin rests directly on the steam pipes and the melting wax falls into the box below.
4. Our waxes are supplied by the New Patent Candle Company of Plymouth.

The paraffin wax has always been extremely economical in use. After its tests each model is melted down and the wax used time and time again. There is no waste at all.

It is amusing to note that the same firm also advertised themselves as sole makers of "Victoria" Prize Medal Household and Toilet Soaps to Her Majesty.

Probably one of the most significant and long term results of the model tests at Haslar has been the drastic reduction achieved in the enormous cost of fuel used by ships of the Royal Navy. Over the century improvements in ship hull design have resulted in more efficiently and economically propelled ships. Quite simply, the Froudes have made ships not only safer but cheaper to run.

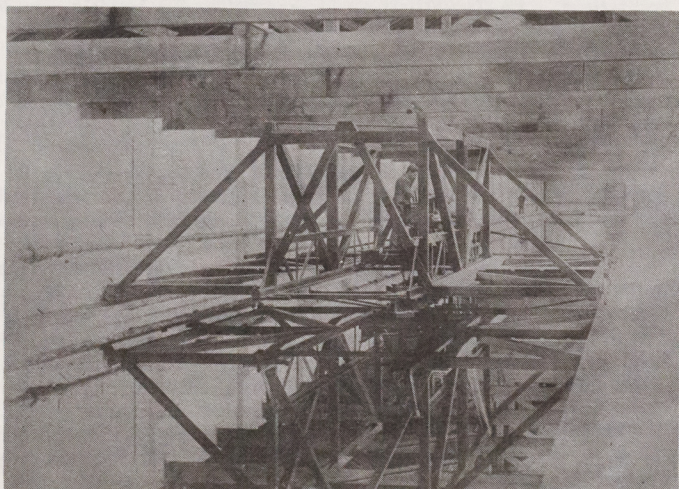
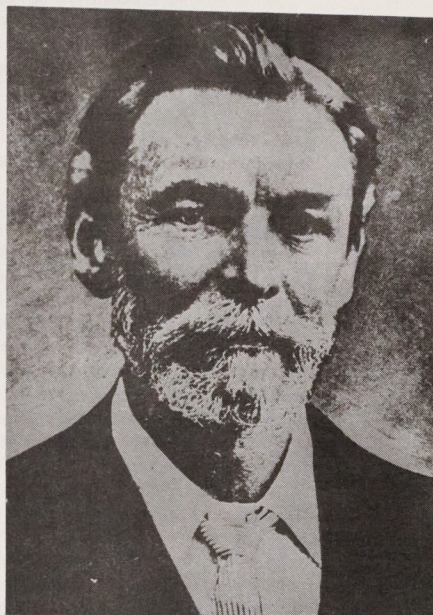
There have been few naval ships during the past century which have not had some aspect of their form tested in the Haslar tank under sea-going conditions. Often Froude would be present at the completed ship's sea-going trials at sea. He and Henry Brunel were present on the forced draught trials of the ill-fated HMS CAMPERDOWN which later in 1893 collided and sank with the battleship VICTORIA in the Mediterranean.

Engaged as it always has been on work which is essentially of an esoteric nature to the layman, the experiment tank at Haslar has always boasted a small, but devoted staff. Those who have been retired many years can still speak with affectionate nostalgia of their days at Haslar. But the tank's oldest and most loyal servants were not human. They were, in fact, eels. Shortly after the opening of the tank in 1886 Froude realised that something would be needed to keep the water fresh and free from algae growth.

Robert Edmund Froude,
F.R.S.,

1846 - 1924

Late of 1, Little Anglesey
and North Lodge



The old ship tank at Haslar showing the original mahogany wood carriage designed by R. E. Froude and made in the Haslar Workshop.

Accordingly, several groups of large fresh-water eels were procured from the pond at Gilkicker. These were placed in the old tank and there they remained for many years. They proved extremely efficient at their job of keeping the water clear of weed and marine growth. One member of staff was appointed eel-keeper and the creatures were granted a special supply of cat's meat. They were finally declared redundant about twenty years ago, with the widespread use of chemical agents for clearing the water.

Many famous and distinguished people have visited Froude's original installations at Haslar. Sir Winston Churchill came in 1914 in his capacity of First Lord of the Admiralty. Lord Reith, then disguised as Commander J. C. W. Reith, RNVR, came to look around the building in 1942. Two people who nearly came in 1898 were Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of York. The obstacle was the Duke's fishing habits. The future King George V and Queen Mary were on a visit to Portsmouth and had expressed a desire to see Mr. Froude's tank. But the Duke - come what may - always fished on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Wrote the C-in-C's distraught secretary, "Can you possibly manage to accommodate Their Royal Highnesses on Wednesday or Friday?". "Please do not trouble them on our behalf", Froude replied with characteristic diffidence. And they were not, to their loss.

In more recent years, the tank was utilized by both the Campbells, Sir Malcolm and his son Donald for experimental work on their record breaking speedboats. But by this time R. E. Froude had retired. He finally left Haslar in 1919 having been in complete charge of the work there since 1886. He died in 1924 at the age of 78, having devoted most of his working life to the study of ship model research. Both William and Robert Edmund Froude's published papers are still used by today's naval architects as standard works of reference on the basic problems of ship model study.

During the Second World War, the old tank achieved another sort of distinction. It became, together with the newer ship tank built in 1930, the emergency water supply for the Gosport area.

It is interesting to recall that when Prince Philip came to the Admiralty Experiment Works Haslar about ten years ago - in order to open the huge manoeuvring tank - he remarked jocularly that the work in the tanks was rather like big boys playing with little toys. Which is much the same sort of comment passed 100 years ago by the people of Totnes who watched Froude senior testing his models in the River Dart. Truly from small beginnings came great things. At Haslar, the big boys are still playing with their toys to very good effect. And, as for William Froude's old tank, it looks good for yet another 100 years.

Note : The author would like to thank the Superintendent of Admiralty Experiment Works and various members of staff, for their help and co-operation in making documentary research possible.

Alverstone Charities

by Godfrey Williams

In the parish of Alverstone, as in many other ancient parishes, public-spirited persons occasionally left endowments to the parochial authorities for relieving poverty in various ways. Up to recent times these authorities tried to carry out the instructions of the testators, but changing social conditions made this increasingly difficult, and in 1969 the Charity Commission reorganised the endowments as the Alverstone Trust and the Jane Holmes Charity. The Trustees of these comprise the Rector ex-officio, two nominees of the Councillors for the Alverstone Ward and two "co-optative" trustees. This article deals, broadly, with the charities involved in this reorganisation; thus it does not cover charities primarily related to parts of the borough outside the present Alverstone, nor does it cover ecclesiastical endowments.

Apart from the gift of the property which became the almshouses, the six earliest endowments took the form of rent charges on land; i.e. the testator left land to his legatees, subject to the payment to the parish of an annual sum by them and by subsequent owners of the land. Of the six endowments concerned, those by Abraham Hewlett (will dated 1671), Jane Holmes (1711) and William Allen (1719) still take the form of rent charges; that of Charles Childe (1750) was found to be invalid in law and therefore lapsed; and those of Capt. John Man (1660) and William Poore (1773) have been converted into lump sums and invested. The four later endowments, by James Staycock (about 1828), Thomas Paul (1878), F. J. Lowes (1884) and Thomas King (1907), took the form of investments from the start. By 1907 there was a District Council, and in consequence Thomas King's charity was administered by them and then the Borough Council, rather than by the church authorities, up to the time of the reorganisation.

Most of these endowments provided, broadly, money for the poor; but the objects of three were more closely defined, and we now come to these.

In his will dated 1773, William Poore of Brockhurst left £5 a year to the church wardens for bread to be given to poor persons, preferably widows, after every Sunday morning's service. In 1826 and again in 1887 it was recorded that nine widows were each given a loaf each Sunday. In 1920 - 1940 five or six widows seem to have received bread each week. By the 1960's the bread was being supplied to the occupants of the almshouses. William Poore's headstone still stands close to the north-west corner of the church; it is beautifully carved, and five lines of verse from it are printed on page 18 of Gosport Records No. 1.

In 1828 Mr. James Straycock, Staycock or Spaycock, of Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, left £78. 11s. 0d. capital, the dividends "to be annually divided between two of the oldest and most respectable Watermen residing in the Parish of Alverstoke, to be selected by the Rector and Church Wardens. The object of such bequest is to manifest the Donor's sense of an act of benevolence rendered him in being ferried over gratis from Gosport to Portsmouth when he was sick and poor, and as an incentive to that class of men to do good when in their power."

The will of Thomas Paul, of Cricklewood, was made in 1878 and proved in 1880. He left £3,000 to the Rector and Church Wardens, firstly for the maintenance of his own grave at Kensal Green, of a memorial tablet there and of the grave of his parents at Alverstoke, and secondly for coals for deserving and necessitous persons at Christmas. The provision for the maintenance of the graves and tablet was invalid in law, and the legacy was therefore from the start applied solely to coal. His parents' grave was on the parish centre site, and was destroyed when that site was cleared a few years ago. By a curious coincidence, a Mrs. Ann Paul had in 1838 left £200 firstly for the repair of a tomb or tombs in Holy Trinity churchyard and secondly for indigent widows; the provision for the tombs was invalid, and Holy Trinity churchyard has been cleared.

We now come to a charity which was originally intended to provide cash for poor widows but which developed in quite a different way. The will of Jane Holmes, which is now in the County Record Office, was made in 1711 and proved in 1712 in the "peculiar" jurisdiction of the Rector of Alverstoke; he was one of the few parochial clergy entitled to prove the wills of his parishioners. She left a rent charge of £2 on her two tenements in Stoake, on the site now known as 17, Church Road, to be distributed to poor widows on Christmas Eve. She left the little cottage at the west end of the said tenements, with the ground as it was then used, to the church wardens and overseers of the poor; this was to be let to sober, orderly tenants, who were not to annoy or disturb the neighbouring tenants, and the rent (after deduction of repairs) was to be distributed to poor widows.

By 1826 there were on the site at the west end what were described as two small old cottages, occupied rent-free by two poor widows nominated by the church wardens; the cottages were maintained by the church. It is not known at what date the property had ceased to be let as intended and had become almshouses; nor is it clear whether the original "little cottage" had been rebuilt. The £2 rent-charge continued to be distributed in sums of 1s. or 1s. 6d. on Christmas Eve.

By 1849 the almshouses were again described as one cottage; they were then rebuilt in their present form for two widows by the church wardens, with the aid of two thank-offerings and other gifts. The tithe map of 1840 had shown the former building as not coming so far forward on the north side as the 1849 one does. To enable the 1849 building to be of sufficient size, the church made an informal exchange with the owner of the adjoining property: they acquired a strip of frontage land

15 ft. by 4 ft. and incidentally the site of the detached privy and a right of way to the latter ; they gave up the almshouses garden, 15 ft. by 18 ft. which is now the left-hand part of the site of John Hunt's adjoining building.

In 1855 the adjoining property was to be sold, and the above exchange was put on a formal basis and approved by the Charity Commission.

The almshouses are practically at the centre of old Alverstoke but this has altered considerably since the 1850's. The church has been rebuilt ; the stocks have disappeared ; three public houses have been closed and used for other purposes. Yet the almshouses themselves are little changed.



THE ALVERSTOKE ALMSHOUSES TODAY

Mural near the Parish Centre - Elizabeth Somerville : 1816 : Aged 51

The sweet remembrance of the Just
Shall flourish when they sleep in Dust

SOURCES

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 GOSPORT'S LOST THEATRES - Hampshire County Times. Lecture Notes on Old Gosport by J. W. Blake. Georgian Theatre in Wessex by Arnold Hare : J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., Publishers.
 HASLAR'S HISTORIC SHIP TANK - Admiralty archives. Correspondence between R. E. Froude and H. M. Brunel. Sir Westcott Abell - Life and Work of William Froude. (Address to British Association 1933). Dictionary of National Biography.
 ALVERSTOKE CHARITIES - Further Report of the Commissioners for Inquiring concerning Charities 1826, pp. 268 - 270 ; A. A. Walford, Historic Sketches of Gosport 1887, pp. 85 - 88, Victoria Co. History of Hants, Vol. 3, 1908, P. 207 ; inscription on almshouses ; Charity Commission Scheme L.2(R)/239, 303 A/2 ; unpublished records of Charity Commission and Trustees. Thomas Paul's parents are not named in his will, but in the Holy Trinity baptismal register for 1 Sept. 1804.

GOSPORT RECORDS - Previous Editions

No. 1	No. 2
Gosport in 1802	Crossing the Harbour in Elizabethan Times
Robert Cruickshank and The Crescent	Le Breton Farm
Bay House and Alverbank	Colonel Bogey's Birthplace
Tombstones in Alverstoke Churchyard	H. H. S. Hornet
Education in Gosport in the early 18th Century	Alverstoke Burial Grounds

The GOSPORT RECORDS is on sale at leading Bookshops in the Borough and also at the Central and Branch Libraries - Price 20p.

Copies can be obtained by post on application to the Honorary Secretary, Town Hall, Gosport, at 25p. to include postage.

Readers wishing to join the Gosport Historic Records and Museum Society and attend lectures should apply to the Honorary Secretary, Town Hall, Gosport, Gosport, enclosing 50p. annual subscription or obtain a form at the Central Library. The next lecture will be at the Town Hall on February 7th, 1972. Speaker : Dr. L. F. W. White, M.B.E., B.Sc.(Econ.), Barrister-at-Law.

HAVE YOU CLEANED OUT THAT CUPBOARD LATELY?

The Gosport Records would be glad of the loan or gift of any old pictures or books of local interest suitable for reproduction. Old Church Magazines, Diaries, Directories, Newspapers etc., can sometimes provide a mine of information well worth recording.

