



Issue No. 7

GOSPORT RECORDS



THE GOSPORT BARBER WHO SHAVED GRATIS

This cartoon published in 1822 depicts the story of a Gosport Barber who, being unable through his incompetence to obtain enough normal clients, shaved impecunious sailors gratis in the hope that when they were awarded prize money they would buy him drinks.

CONTENTS

	Page
Foreword	1
The Inns outside the Ramparts	2
Defence of Stokes Bay against the Spanish Armada Part IV	8
Historic Homes No. 7 - Bury Hall	14
The Bligh Tomb at Alverstoke	19
Gosport's Yachting Heyday	23
Sources	28

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F O R E W O R D

It was with regret that I was forced by ill-health to resign as Editor of the Gosport Records and I must wish Mr. C. J. Washington every success in so kindly stepping into the breach. He has a great love and knowledge of Gosport and, given the same help and encouragement that I was, the Records are bound to go from strength to strength.

I still hope to contribute and in this connection it is interesting to remember that when we first published doubts were expressed as to whether there was enough historic material to last more than two or three editions. In fact experience has shown that there is a vast amount of untapped knowledge needing only digging out to last for years. Illustrations are still the most difficult to find and we hope that readers will continue to send in anything which they feel may be useful.

H. T. ROGERS

The Inns outside the Ramparts

by H. T. Rogers

Having been taken to task since my last article on the old Gosport pubs for dwelling too much on the squalid and ignoring the picturesque, I must admit that it is more pleasant to come out of the town and make a tour of the wayside inns and taverns in the villages and hamlets outside of the ramparts in 1800.

Old Gosport was a squalid place even for the privileged few who lived in Upper High Street and Coldharbour, and unfortunately it has taken the better part of this century to get rid of the image. Only last December a newly published book stated that Holy Trinity Church was surrounded by slums proving that the author could not have been here for years, and a well known T.V. personality told me that he had always imagined Gosport to be a dirty seaport whereas to his surprise he had found it to be one of the most delightful places on the South Coast and was coming to live here.

By the early part of the last century the wealthier members of the community were already moving out of the town, and fine country houses were beginning to appear in the villages of Bury (sometimes called Berry) and Alverstoke. Old Gosport within the ramparts was isolated by the King's Lands or the open spaces in front of the defences designed to provide a field of fire for the military. It is to this that we owe today the open approach to the town with Walpole Park on one side and the playing fields on the other.

One of the better kinds of entertainment for strollers who ventured outside the ramparts must have been the Spring Gardens. Little is known of these but they were almost certainly of a similar type to the Vauxhall Gardens in London and it is interesting to note that on a map dated 1791 the area where the railway station and oil fuel depot now stand was actually called Vauxhall. We do know that there was a bowling green and somewhere close by a SPRING GARDEN INN. Around the corner on the road to London was a pub called the CRICKETERS which conjures up a picture of gentlemen in top hats playing in the fields before one got to the expanding village of Forton.

The majority of Gosport inns are middle Victorian and many of the earlier ones, such as THE SUN, THE BLENHEIM, THE WINDMILL, disappeared years ago. On Stokes Bay beach THE THREE GUNS stood close to the present site of the Sailing Club, and THE STOKES BAY HOUSE was right at the water's edge near Bay House School. Not even the trace of a foundation stone remains today. If, however,

we could take a walk around in the early part of last century we would still see a surprising number of familiar signs and buildings.

Just inside Stoke Road is a most interesting old public house with the almost unique name of THE NO PLACE, which was once an old inn on the lane to Alverstoke. I have searched the brewer's records and I can find only one other such sign in all England and that is near Plymouth. The Devon sign has a housewife standing at her cottage door with arms akimbo demanding of her husband where he has been to which he replies shamefacedly "No Place". Legend has it that in Gosport the gypsies were not allowed inside the ramparts after dark, and having no place to go would tether their caravans in the woods where Holly Street and Oak Street now stand. The inn which they used became known as THE NO PLACE and the name has stuck ever since. Records show that a public house of this name has stood on the same site since the early 18th century although the building has probably changed.

Across the road we would possibly inspect the plot of land for which Mr. Tribe of Peel Lodge was negotiating in order to build an inn and a brewery and which he proposed to call THE ROYAL ARMS BREWERY. Many years later it was reputed to be the last public house in Gosport to brew its own beer.





The Vine

Certainly we would drop in at THE VINE even if only for a pot of tea. In all old directories it is described as a "tavern and tea garden" and older residents tell me they can remember a tea garden still there at the beginning of this century. The deeds show that in the early 19th century the grounds extended over the road and as far as the creek. It must have been a pleasant spot to rest on the way to Alverstoke.

At that time there was a HALFWAY HOUSE, and some local historians have thought this to be the inn which stands at the corner of Alver Road. Research now shows that this is incorrect and that in 1800 the original HALFWAY HOUSE was in fact an earlier name for THE WHITE HART - not the present new building but the old inn which nestled alongside the Bury Arch Railway Bridge and which many will remember.

The fields where Linden Grove and Foster Road now stand were known as the Halfway House Fields and we would have to cross these to get along Anglesey Road, then a mere unnamed track, to get to Stoke Village. Here in 1800 were only two licensed houses - THE LAMB and THE FIVE BELLS, both in Church Road and both still there today, although one is now a dwelling house and the other a news-agents. I am told that if you have good eyesight you can still see the name THE FIVE BELLS over the shop.

Isolated on the road to Haslar we would still find THE FIGHTING

COCKS which has been there since 1737 in the reign of George II. Writing many years ago an historian states that there was once a cockpit, but unfortunately he fails to say where or give proof. On the 8th October 1802 there was a complaint to the Alverstoke Court Leet that the "Causeway from the Fighting Cocks to Haslar Hospital Pump is dangerous and in need of repair". The use of the word "Causeway" indicates that in those days the waters of the creek must have been much closer to the inn than they are today.

The Court Leet of the Alverstoke Liberty (as distinct from that of Gosport within the ramparts) would always meet at a convenient inn, and for twenty-four years the men of Stoke, Bury, Forton, Brockhurst, Elson, Hardway and Woodcut found THE QUEENS HEAD so convenient or the brew so palatable that court was held there annually from 1790 to 1814. To get to THE QUEENS HEAD, one of Gosport's most historic inns, we would have to go through Bury Village, noticing that the present site of THE WILTSHIRE LAMB was then just a tea garden and skittle alley, and along Annshill Lane to join the Toll Road near the windmill at the top of Forton Creek.

It was the duty of the Court Leet to listen to complaints and to appoint a Reeve, a Constable, Hayward and Ale Connor or Taster. For many years the landlord of the QUEENS HEAD, Mr. Thomas Mason, was held in such high esteem that he served in his time in all the varied offices. Next door there was a cattle pound where stray cattle were impounded and the owner would have to pay a shilling to get the animal out again. As a joke the inn used to boast it sold beer "by the pound" and many a local won a free pint by a bet on this. Many interesting cases are to be found in the records of the Court Leet, now in the possession of the Gosport Historic Records Society. The names of some of the members of the jury have a familiar Gosport ring about them even today - Ayling, Carter, Woodford, Urry, Abraham, Chatfield, Rogers, Laphorn.

We would not recognise THE KINGS HEAD, as in 1800 it was not only a different building but it was then called THE UNICORN. Later it became THE DUKE OF CUMBERLAND before it got its present name.

The WHEATSHEAF was then the offices of the Toll Road, where carts would go over the weighbridge, which is still there today, to determine the toll to be paid to pass the Toll Bar at the corner of Eastbourne Avenue. THE WHEATSHEAF was not to become an inn until the toll was abolished in 1878.

Taking the road to Elson and passing Hangman's Tree we would see the sign of THE THREE TUNS. The deeds of this old inn go back to 1710, and it was a very different building then to what it is today, although old residents tell me they can remember when it had

a thatched roof. It first became an inn in 1735 and it was sold by Mr. Derrick to Mr. Avery of Avery Lane in 1745.

At Hardway the first inn we would discover would be THE GOLIATH, famous for its smuggling and now a yacht marine store. Curiously enough it was once used by the Customs and Excise. THE JOLLY ROGER, until recently THE ROSE AND CROWN, was then known as THE MAYFLOWER LIGHTER. Some years later a MAYFLOWER inn opened further along the shore which is probably why THE MAYFLOWER LIGHTER changed to THE ROSE AND CROWN in 1828, but I have been unable to discover the circumstances.

Returning to Forton across the fields or by Stoney Butts, the stepping stones across the creek, the first familiar sight we would see would be THE TRAFALGAR, only in those days it was called THE BATTLE OF MINDEN. It was opened in 1791 but our landlords were a patriotic lot and after the death of Admiral Lord Nelson the inn proudly changed its name to THE BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR. I suspect that the French prisoners of war in the prison close by, some of whom were allowed out on parole, took a poor view. There were 4,000 of them and trade must have been good.

A little way away THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE, today one of Gosport's newest inns, stands on a very historic site. The deeds date back to 1696, but it was not opened as an inn until 1761 when it was sold to Carter and Bedford the Brewers. The conveyance relates to "all that land and message lately used as a hospital" and I feel that this must



The Old "White Hart" formerly "Half-Way House"



An Old Inn at Forton

have been part of the old Fortune Hospital run as a private venture on contract to the Navy by Nathaniel Jackson, and which site has often been in dispute. The inn was opened as the COMMODORE BROWN, but in 1810 it became THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE. The first ship THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE, Flagship of Admiral Lord Howe, was blown up in 1800. The new QUEEN CHARLOTTE ship was launched in 1810 and this may have been the reason for the inn changing its name in the same year. This ship in due course became H.M.S. Excellent and the figurehead was erected at Whale Island. THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE today sports a figurehead which is of considerable age and which was taken from the old inn, but there is unfortunately no record of its origin.

There is still a vast amount of research to be carried out on our inns and I have not attempted to tackle anything later than the reign of George III. The story of our public houses is tied inevitably with the history and customs of our town and there is yet much to be learned, especially from those built later in Victorian times. I am most grateful to Mr. A. J. Miles and Mr. M. Bryan of Brickwoods Ltd. for their kind assistance and encouragement.

Let us complete our pub crawl by returning to the old town within the ramparts. It is very different today from the rip-roaring seaport it was in 1800 when some sailors took down the skeleton of Jack the Painter, whose body was hanged on Blockhouse beach, and pawned it over the bar at an inn in old Gosport for half-a-crown.

Defence of Stokes Bay against the Spanish Armada

by G. H. and B. E. D. Williams

PART IV

In the well-known "Cowdray print" of the 1545 naval battle off Southsea during which the Mary Rose was sunk, there can be seen on the Gosport shore of the Solent three circular fortifications: the Blockhouse at the Harbour entrance; an earthwork called Lynden's Bulwark near it; and Haselworth Castle on the site of the present Fort Monckton. By 1588 the Blockhouse seems to have disappeared and the other two were decayed.

The joint Lords Lieutenant of Hampshire were responsible for organising the defence of the county on land and we have covered some of the recommendations of one of them, the Earl of Sussex. The matter passed from them to higher authority. On 30 May, 1588, Sir John Norris, an officer with much experience of active service in Ireland and the Low Countries, submitted a report (1) on the defence of the county; the salient points of the report, as affecting the Alverstoke area, are below.

In general he opposed building new coastal fortifications, such as the one near Haselworth Castle which had been proposed by the Earl of Sussex.

In examyninge of the quallytie of the landing places, we found them so many and so large, as very hardly and not without extreme charge they are to be helpt by any manner of fortyfycasion.

The coast between Portsmouth and Southampton should in the first instance be defended by men from Alton, Portsdown and Fawley, and to cover their retreat to Portsmouth (if it became necessary) he recommended that Lynden's Bulwark should be repaired.

....from Porchemouthe to Southampton, I thinck yt neccessarye that ther bee apoyntid 700 men with the company of horse named for yt place, out of the devidions of Alton Porchedowne, and falley, to be distributid as followeth viz at hamble haven 150 / at Tytchefeld 150 / at Browndowne 200 / at Stokes Baye 200 / and for as muche as theise men being forssed to retyer ore repayre to Porchemouthe, yt shalbe neccessarye for theire more salftye, that ane old entrenchment being overe against the bulwarke at Porchemouthe be renewed, otherwise they might be greatlie distressed, before

provysion myght be mad for passing of them over the watter;
the said entrenchment may also serve to very good purpose,
by hyndering of the enymye from possessing of yt ground,
from the which with his artillery he shall greatlie indomage
the towne, and shutt up the passage of the haven....

On the first alarm, some of the forces should garrison the
coast; reinforcements should assemble at Romsey, and go to the place
of attempted enemy landing.

Suche captaynes and companyes as are alreedy by order appoyntid
for the strength and defence of the seacost, and places,
shall repayer uppon the first Allarme to their severall
places of charge, and the rest of the forces of the shere,
armed and trayned best for the bodye of the shere, shall be
drouven to the rendezvous appoyntid at Romsey, and from
thence to marche to the place attempted.

But further reinforcements from other countie might be
necessary.

....we therefore desier yt good consideracon may be had....
what greatte number are neccessarye to be drouven out of
other countieys adiacent to repayre with speed to the place
of Rendivou, and from thence in some strengthe to marche and
make head to the enyme attempting to land.

If the enemy should succeed in landing and advancing, the
forces would retreat behind the existing defences of Winchester,
Southampton and Portsea Island and into a new defended area to be
prepared at Ringwood or Fordingbridge. The horsemen, of whom 43
were allocated to Browndown, would drive the cattle into these
defended areas and destroy other provisions of which the enemy might
avail themselves.

Yt is thought fytt yt the horsemen shall be partid in this
sort, Capt Richard Norton with his company being 36 horse to
the Ile of porchemouth, Capt John Semor with his company
being 43 . horse to browne downe, Capt William Kingsmell
being . 51 . horse to Stansorre, and Capt John Bulbley being
22 . brouenmouthe, alwayes provyded yt yf any landing shalbe
forceable mad in any of ther partes, that then the captaynes
of horsemen do imploye their selfs in dryveng awaye the
cattell to suche places as are appoyntid for retraict, and
receipt of them, and to make spoyle of suche vyttells as can
not be removed, or yt the enymye maye prevayle hym self of.

But the captains of horse were to be warned not to take the
alarm hotly and without good reason.

Yt is....especially to be provyded, yt theise captaynes do
not take the Allarme so whotlye, as yt they make any of
provysion untill ther be apparent cause.



Sir John Norris.

From an Original by Zanchero, late in the Ford Collection.

the 24 of Auguste. 1685
your Majesty's most
Dutty full subject
J. Norris

The Autograph from an original Letter in the Possession of John Th...

So much for the Report of Sir John Norris. On 5 June, 1588, the following submission was made to the Privy Council regarding coastal defence works (2). It revived the proposals by the Earl of Sussex for Haselworth Castle and Stokes Bay Marsh transcribed in Gosport Records No. 5; it mentioned several place-names shown on the contemporary map reproduced there.

A Remembrance for certayne Matters to be considered of by her Majestie and my Lords of the Councell viewed and perused by Sir John Norris at his last beinge here upon this parte of of the sea coaste

First where there is Landinge places at Stokes baye and Browne downe & that the same maye be made gardable with some chardges, aswell by making of a traverse wall of stone to kepe in the salt walter from Haslewore Castle to Gawmore pounde as also that the cliffe may be so pared and vamuired as it may be a defence against our Enemy and safetie for our pieple Also whereas there is an owld bulworcke decayed called Lymdens bullworcke right over against the Round Tower:/ is either in my juddgment to be refortified or utterly to be demolished and overthrowne./

The Landing places betwene the Watche Howse by Southsaie Castle and Cates pointe, and so to Eastney pointe is to be considered of and some small skonces to be made aswell in this Islande as also in Haylinge to kepe aswell the Entrie of Langston haven as of Chichester haven./

Item whereas Haslewore Castle is decayed and fallen downe that it maye be considered upon that a sconce maye be made there./ aswell for defence of the harbour as also for the ntrance in at Stokes baye./

(Note: To "vamure" a position is to build a wall in front of it. A "sconce" is a small fort or earthwork.)

On 30 June the Council considered this submission (3) and wrote to the Lords Lieutenant (4). But both the Council's minutes and their letter to the Lords Lieutenant refer to detailed instructions which have unfortunately since been lost, and we shall therefore never know precisely what was decided. But whatever the instructions were, there was little time to carry them out, as the Armada passed the Isle of Wight on 25 July.

FINIS



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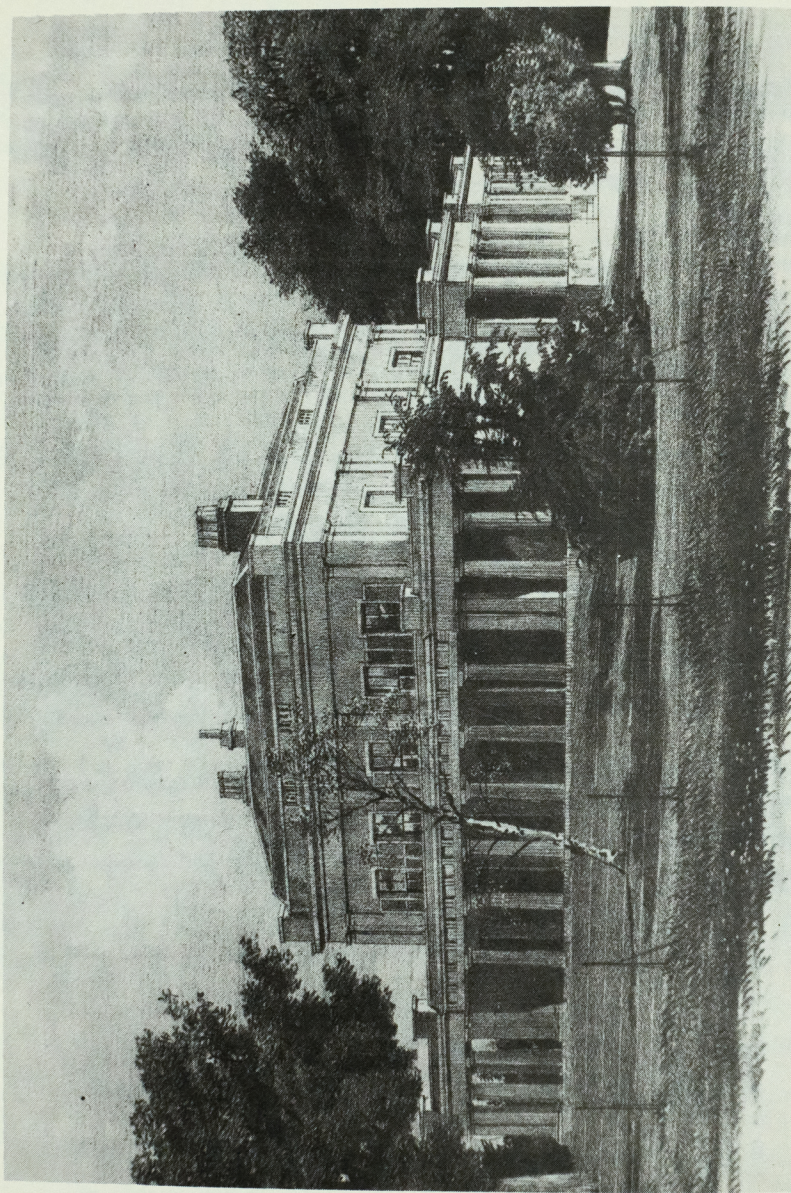
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ILLUSTRATIONS

- Page 8 Tracing of main features from part of an early 17th century chart (Hydrographic Dept., Ministry of Defence, Chart D 623, on loan to National Maritime Museum).
- Page 11 British Museum 210727 (1681) 75.5.8.644. By courtesy of the Trustees.
- Above The Submission to the Privy Council of 5 June 1588.



BURY HALL

British Museum Maps 136 a10 (8-9) by courtesy of the Trustees

Historic Homes

No. 7 BURY HALL

by H. T. Rogers

Bury Hall, so often confused with Bury House or Bury Lodge, and now the site of Northcott House Old People's Home, was one of the most lovely and graceful mansions in old Alverstoke. It is time its story was told as although it will be remembered with affection by many hundreds who served in the Home Guard, of which it was the Headquarters, it has now completely disappeared and will soon be forgotten by a new generation.

It was in 1815 that Captain John Brett Purvis, R.N. brought his cousin and bride to his new house in Alverstoke standing in 70 acres of gardens and pasture land. John came from a distinguished naval family. His grandfather had been Comptroller of the Navy, his uncles all held senior rank, and his father, who had served with Lord Howe, was a famous Admiral with a large estate at Boldre in the New Forest. Between them the happy couple were allied to many of the most notable families in Hampshire.

John's wife, Renira, was a daughter of Commodore George Purvis, R.N. of Blackbrook Cottage, Fareham, better known today as Bishopswood, the home of the Bishops of Portsmouth. Her brother had married Mary Jane Austen, the daughter of Admiral Sir Francis Austen, K.C.B. of Portsdown Lodge and a niece of Jane Austen, the celebrated novelist.

If you have read Jane Austen's books of the period and knew Bury Hall you can probably imagine the scene as the domestic staff lined up to greet their new mistress. The lofty vestibule and entrance hall 35 ft. long and 16 ft. wide culminating in an inner hall and a spiral stone staircase, with the housemaids no doubt dropping a curtsey to the bride and bridegroom. On the left of the hall the great dining room with bay windows opening out on to the colonnade and double doors leading into an equally large drawing room and ante-room. Near the stairs was a smaller room described as the gentlemen's room, where the men could smoke their pipes.

On the right a further hall leading to the butler's pantry, housekeeper's room and a large kitchen with a servants' hall in the basement and extensive cellarage for wines and stores. A back stairs led to the servants' bedrooms and five secondary bedrooms. The main bedrooms were ranged around a circular

balcony overlooking the hall and lit by a dome shaped skylight. The rooms facing south looked out on to trim lawns and parklands with a view of the Solent in the distance.

In the stables there was a double coach house and a granary with nine stones. Close by was a small farmery with a cow house for seven animals, a piggery, fowl house and a gardener's cottage. There was also a large walled-in kitchen garden and some glass houses 130 ft. in length. The estate included Bury Hall Farm in Alverstoke Village, and then continued along Stokes Bay to the boundaries of Alverbank House and Bay House, down what is now Gomer Lane to Privett and back to Bury Cross.

In the fulness of time John Brett Purvis, now a Rear-Admiral, retired from the Navy loaded with honours and prize money, a magistrate and Deputy Lieutenant of the County. Under his care the estate had grown to 108 acres and included a cottage on the site of the house known today as "Alvara", formerly "Ryde View". John had two sons: George, who appears to have been somewhat of a weakling, was gazetted a Lieutenant in the 78th Highlanders, but it is doubtful if he saw any service as he died at his home at No. 11 The Crescent at the early age of 22 years in 1851.

Richard Purvis, the second son, succeeded to the estate. Bury Hall had now become the Great House to the village. Bay House and Alverbank might well have been the social and political centres, but it was the Hall and its farms which provided the villagers with



Home Guard at Bury Hall

employment. Following family tradition Richard joined the Royal Navy and like his father attained Flag Rank. At one time he had been Flag Lieutenant to Admiral Sir Charles Hotham, after whom he was to name his son.

Charles Hotham Purvis does not appear to have lived long at Bury Hall after his father died in 1875, and in 1878 the estate was put up for auction in five lots. Four lots were sold leaving just the house and Bury Hall Farm with about 41 acres of land. There then followed a succession of tenants including one rather formidable lady, Mrs. Lane, who had the endearing habit at Christmas of presenting red flannel petticoats to the more virtuous of the village maidens.

When Charles Purvis died in 1905 the property was purchased by Major C. E. G. Stalkartt, M.D., who had just returned from St. Helena to take charge of Haslar Military Station Hospital. Major Stalkartt promptly sold off the farm but vastly improved the house by putting in the magnificent oak panelling on the ground floor. After his death his two sons found that such a large house was quite uneconomic and a few years before the last war sold to Mr. G. V. Northcott, who broke up the estate for development. Then came Hitler, all building ceased, and Bury Hall stood derelict.

This is not the place to write the story of the Home Guard. Suffice it to say that in 1940 I found myself in charge of 2,000 men, 13 rifles, and 39 rounds of ammunition - a situation which quickly eased when American arms began to arrive. It became necessary to find a Headquarters for the Gosport Sector and Bury Hall was ideally suitable by its size and location. The old house burst into activity, with lecture rooms, offices, canteens, messes, guardrooms, while the grounds were littered with all the paraphernalia of war - barbed wire, slit trenches, Nissen Ammunition Huts, etc.

Much good natured fun is poked at the Home Guard today, but it would still have given a good account of itself. Gosport was essentially a service town and a high percentage of local men were either ex-service or came from service families. The older ones may not have been able to run but they knew how to use a rifle as a regular Army Unit once found when challenged to a shoot. Not until afterwards was it disclosed that every man in the winning Home Guard team was an ex-Royal Marine Musketry Instructor.

Bury Hall did not escape the war unscathed. Throughout April and May 1941 bombs fell in and around the grounds, one just missing a corner of the building and severely damaging houses in The Avenue. On August 19th a stick of bombs fell across the drive exploding in the trees at the entrance and causing havoc in Bury Hall Lane, where there were a number of casualties and houses demolished. The structure of the old house was badly shaken.

Then came 'D' Day, with long lines of tanks waiting in Jellicoe Avenue to embark from Stokes Bay, and Movement Control



H.M. Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, at Bury Hall

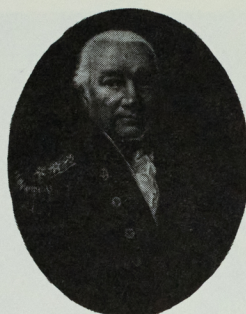
making use of Bury Hall communications. With the war over, and the property empty again, the vandals soon finished off what the enemy had begun. Lead was stripped from the roof and everything useful taken.

At the end of the first world war the people of Gosport had raised sufficient money to build a hospital as a memorial. At a Public Meeting a decision was now taken to build an Old Peoples' Home with bungalows and a central block. A vast amount of work was undertaken by a committee headed by Alderman John Gregson, Alderman A. R. Nobes and Alderman A. Eales. With great generosity Mr. G. V. Northcott offered Bury Hall with $3\frac{3}{4}$ acres of land and donations amounting to £10,000 while Council official and local contractors offered their services freely and without charge.

The old mansion was found to be too badly damaged to be of use and sadly it had to be pulled down. Ten years later, by one of those happy personal chances which happen once in a lifetime, I had the honour to be elected Mayor of Gosport, and it fell to my lot to invite Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother to open the new building on the site of my old Headquarters. On a Summer's day on July 20th 1955 in peaceful surroundings far different from those war years, Her Majesty congratulated the people of Gosport on their efforts and added "This is an achievement of which all who live here may be truly proud". One felt that old Admiral Purvis also would have been proud of his old home.

The Bligh Tomb at Alverstoce

Admiral
Sir Richard Rodney Bligh



by G. H. Williams

Leaving Alverstoce churchyard by the lych gate, one sees on the left a chest tomb on which the surname Bligh occurs a number of times. Many have supposed that "Captain Bligh of the Bounty" was buried here. Actually he lies in a more ornate chest tomb in St. Mary's churchyard at Lambeth, close to Lambeth Palace, having died as Vice-Admiral William Bligh. He seems likely to have been a second cousin of Captain John Bligh and Admiral Sir Richard Rodney Bligh, who were buried at Alverstoce.

The father of the Alverstoce family was Richard Bligh, who came of Cornish stock. He joined HMS Dreadnought as an able seaman in 1729/30. He became a midshipman in 1734 and a Lieutenant in 1740. In 1733 and 1734 there served with him in Dreadnought George Rodney, later Admiral Lord Rodney. The latter, though mustered as able seaman, was there under an arrangement for training young gentlemen as future officers; possibly Richard had some such status.

On 10 February, 1734/5, Richard married Ann Page at Alverstoce. They had four children baptised at Gosport Chapel (Holy Trinity): John in 1735; Richard Rodney in 1737 with George Rodney as godfather; Susanna in 1739; and Ann in 1746. Three of these were buried in the Alverstoce tomb.

John Bligh became a Lieutenant, RN, in 1759. In 1769 he married Elizabeth Titcher at Alverstoce. (Jeremiah and Philip Titcher were among the Trustees appointed by the Act of 1762/3 for maintaining the streets of Gosport, and Capt. Edward Titcher, RN, lived in Gosport in 1792.) John Bligh rose to the rank of Captain and in 1790 he was responsible for naval impressment in Gosport, i.e. the press-gang. He died at Gosport in 1795. He was buried, in the first instance, about 25 yards south of the present Bligh tomb. In 1798 his son Capt. (later Rear-Admiral) John Bligh married Sarah Leeke at Alverstoce; she was buried at Alverstoce in 1807, but we do not know in what grave.

Richard Rodney Bligh became a Lieutenant, RN, in 1757. In 1765 he married Ann, daughter of Sir Edward Worsley, a member of one of the leading families in the Isle of Wight. In 1774 their daughter Charlotte was buried at Alverstoce in the grave in which her uncle John was later buried. In 1777 Richard Rodney Bligh became Captain, in 1784 he was said to be "of Fareham", and in 1790 he was living in Gosport on half pay.



H.M.S. ALEXANDER (RIGHT OF CENTRE) TEN MINUTES BEFORE SURRENDER
National Maritime Museum, London; engraving, published
Portsmouth 1800, of painting by T. Guest.

In 1794 he was Captain of HMS Alexander when, in company with one other British ship, she encountered a squadron of nine French ships; after a desperate defence he surrendered. There were on board with him his son Midshipman George Miller Bligh (aged 10) and his future son-in-law Lieut. Charles Carter. Richard Rodney Bligh had just been promoted to Rear-Admiral (though he had not been officially notified), and was reasonably treated by the French; but the remainder of the ship's complement, officers and ratings alike, with an English lady and her daughters, were confined together in a crowded French prison at Brest with no furniture, straw to sleep on and a miserable diet. Charles Carter escaped but was recaptured; he later struck down a guard but avoided detection by dressing as a woman.

After his release Richard Rodney Bligh was court-martialled for surrendering his ship but was honourably acquitted. He eventually became Admiral of the Red and Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath.

His sister Ann Bligh married Francis Stephens. At one time he lived in Gosport but in 1783 he was Clerk of the Cheque at Sheerness and from 1790 or earlier to 1805 was a Commissioner of Victualling in London.

Richard Rodney Bligh and Francis Stephens constructed the tomb at Alverstoke and buried in it their wives, who died in 1797 and 1800 respectively. The underground vault is 8 feet 10 inches square - much

larger than the chest tomb above and wider even than the stone surround which once supported railings. They then obtained from the Diocesan Registrar a faculty, now in the possession of the Gosport Historic Records and Museum Society, for "appropriating the same as and for a Burying-place for themselves and their Families from time to time when any of them might happen to depart this Life"; the families were to maintain the vault at their own expense, and the parishioners were not to interfere with them "in opening making use of and enjoying the said vault for and as a Burying place". Captain John Bligh is not mentioned in the faculty but is on the inscription; his remains seem to have been transferred to the vault at a later date.

In 1800 Richard Rodney Bligh married Mary Golightly of Ham Common, Surrey; there is a Golightly tomb in Alverstoke churchyard, and John Golightly, brewer, was a Trustee under the above-mentioned Act of 1762/3.

Richard Rodney Bligh was stated in the faculty of 1800 to be living in Cold Harbour (later Clarence Square), Gosport. But by 1811 he had moved to Southampton. He died there in 1821. His widow died there in 1834. Francis Stephens had died in Middlesex in 1807. All three were buried in the vault at Alverstoke. By a curious coincidence Richard Rodney Bligh had bought his Southampton house from the executors of William Curry, the Town Clerk of Southampton, who was buried in 1810 in a vault a little west of the Bligh vault.

Richard Rodney Bligh's son, George Miller Bligh, served in the Victory at the Battle of Trafalgar as a Lieutenant and was severely wounded; he should have left the ship on promotion shortly before the battle, but this had not been practicable. He had further service afloat, during which he rose to Captain, and eventually lived at Southampton. He died there in 1834 and his funeral at Alverstoke was substantially in accordance with the instructions in his will. This begins:

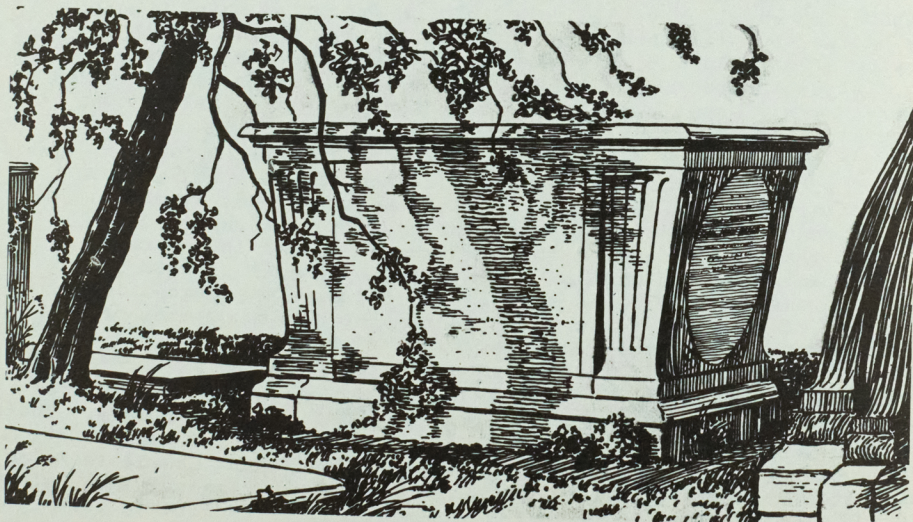
"I resign my soul to its Creator in humble hopes of its future happiness as in the disposal of a being infinitely good in the first place as to my body my will is that it be buried in the family Vault at Alverstoke and that it be carried to the Grave by six of the poorest seafaring men belonging to that Parish to each of whom I give a suit of Blue as mourning Also I give one guinea to each of the poor fellows I direct my coffin to be made of oak with no ornament whatever upon it in respect to my funeral my wish is that it should be as plain as possible ..."

The above-mentioned Lieut. (later Vice-Admiral) Charles Carter married Richard Rodney Bligh's youngest daughter Sophia Holmes. Their daughter Sophia was buried in John Bligh's 1795 grave in 1800. It seems possible that her remains and those of her aunt Charlotte Bligh were later transferred to the Bligh tomb with his remains, though they are not mentioned on the existing inscription. From 1804 to 1810 Charles commanded the Isle of Wight Sea Fencibles.

Charles and Sophia's daughter Louisa Caroline was buried at Alverstoke in 1810, but we do not know in what grave. Their daughter Eliza was buried in the Bligh tomb in 1814 and Elizabeth Rogers, for 15 years a nurse in the Carter family, in 1820. But at some stage the family constructed their own vault and transferred to it the remains of Eliza and of Elizabeth Rogers. The Carter tomb is on the north side of the churchyard near the east end and looks much the same size as the Bligh one, but the vault below seems to be comparatively small, having been described by the Sexton as a "single vault". Another daughter Mary was buried in it in 1838 and Vice-Admiral Carter himself in 1847. But there were buried in the Bligh tomb his wife Sophia in 1837 and their daughter Georgianna Margaretta in 1842, five months after her marriage to Lieut. George Johnson, RN. The mason made an unfortunate mistake in a text in Georgianna's inscription: "What I do thou knowest not not" instead of "not now".

There was one more burial in the Bligh tomb, that of Sir Richard Rodney Bligh's second daughter Ann Caroline, widow of Lt. Col. Driffield, Royal Marines, in 1843. (She had from at least 1821 to 1830 been living in York Street, a continuation northwards of Sea Horse Street). This was the tenth known permanent interment there.

A transcript of the inscription made before 1875 shows a number of blanks, suggesting that certain portions which are now legible were then illegible; if so, the inscription must have since been at any rate partly recut. It seems possible that one or two names have disappeared from the inscription altogether in the course of repairs.



Drawing by Rear-Adml. R. W. Paffard, C.B., C.B.E.

Gosport's Yachting Heyday

by Lesley Burton

The following somewhat unflattering comments by a former yachtsman revisiting Gosport after an interval of forty years are quoted by Mr. John W. Nicholson in his book "Great Years in Yachting" (Nautical Publishing Company, Lymington).

"We were aghast - no C and N slipways where I remember the 'J's' in 1925 and 1930, but three skyscrapers like multi-storeyed public lavatories where the old 'Thatched House' used to stand the pub was convenient for a mid-day pint; we referred to it as the 'Bowsprit Arms'."

With imagination we may envisage the old Gosport beloved of the international yachting fraternity, for it is a fact that for something like half a century Gosport was its Mecca.

The first monarch to take a serious interest in yachting was Charles II. Two centuries later Queen Victoria's Heir Apparent renewed Royal interest in the sport, and later, as King Edward VII, he was to put Gosport on the map in a unique way. One of his circle of friends included the Irish-born millionaire grocer Sir Thomas Lipton.

Lipton's name will be forever associated with Britain's struggle to regain the America's Cup. His earlier yachts Shamrock I - III were built for him by the Scots designer William Fife, but for Shamrock IV in 1914 and Shamrock V in 1928 Tommy Lipton travelled South to engage the talents of Gosport's Charles Nicholson. His efforts were to no avail, the Cup remaining securely in American hands.

When Sir Thomas Lipton died in 1931 at the age of eighty, yachting lost one of its most colourful characters. Referred to scathingly as 'the boating grocer' by Kaiser Wilhelm II, Lipton cleverly extracted the maximum amount of publicity for his grocery empire out of the sport he loved. It is said that during one of the America's Cup contests a New York reporter asked him whether he smoked. Lipton's characteristic reply was, "Yes, bacon !"

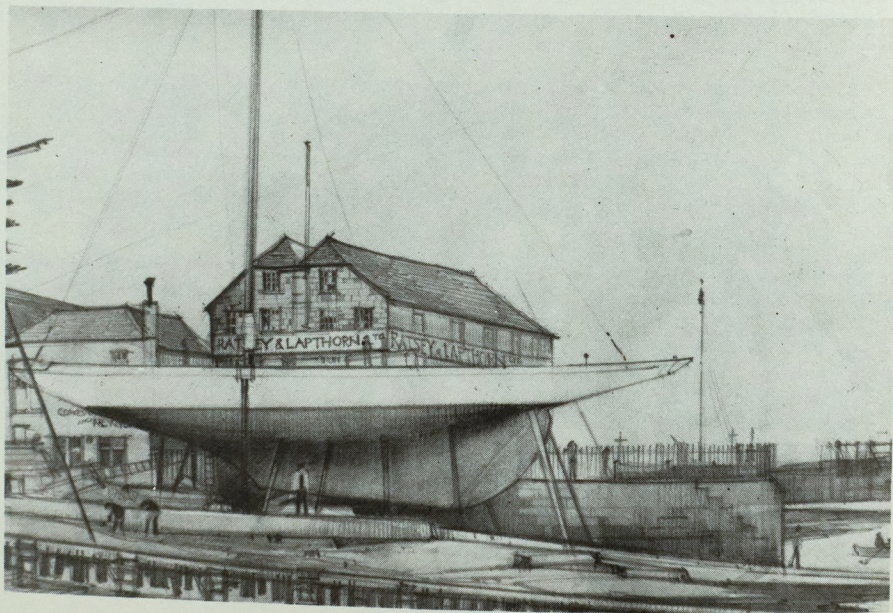
From the beginning of this century Gosport was already well established as the town boasting the two firms of Camper and Nicholson, and Ratsey and Lapthorn who could satisfy the exacting requirements of the affluent and knowledgeable yachting set. However, the real 'big-time' came during the inter-war years. This was the era of the 'Big Class' - the 'J's' and the 23 metres. Charles Nicholson's was the mastermind behind these elegant creations.

In 1923, Mrs. R. E. Workman, a vivacious sportswoman well remembered by older Gosportonians, created a sensation with her 23 metres Nicholson-designed cutter 'Nyria'. This was the first yacht ever to be fitted with a jib-headed mainsail, later to be renowned as the Bermudian rig. This design innovation was a triumph for the old-established firm of sailmakers in Quay Lane, Ratsey and Lapthorn. Their chief cutter, Stanley Lapthorn, was responsible for 'Nyria's' enormous mainsail, in which he estimated there were over two miles of hand-stitching with a precise pattern of 33 stitches to every 9 inches of cloth.

In 1928 Sir Mortimore Singer came to Gosport for a Nicholson-designed yacht, the 23 metre 'Astra'. When Singer looked into Ratsey's workrooms he was gratified to see the girls working on 'Astra's' sails with the aid of Singer sewing machines.

In 1933 Mr. W. Stephenson, the Managing Director of Woolworths, order a 'J' class yacht at the Gosport yard. The finished product was christened 'Velsheda', incorporating the names of his three daughters, Velma, Sheila and Daphne. It is interesting to note that this yacht's model trials were done in the Walpole Park pond, itself later to become the international venue for model yacht racing.

The yachting set was not entirely male-dominated. Mention has already been made of Britain's Mrs. Workman. Several distinguished



yachtswomen had boats designed and fitted out at Gosport. One of the most intriguing personalities was Madame Virginie Hériot, a glamorous Parisienne who owned the Galeries Lafayette in Paris and London. Her three-masted schooner 'Ailee' of all-steel construction was built at Gosport in 1928. Like Lipton, Madame Hériot had an eye for publicity. She enjoyed receiving visitors to her yacht in its bathroom, which was usually headily perfumed with toilet products available at her stores.

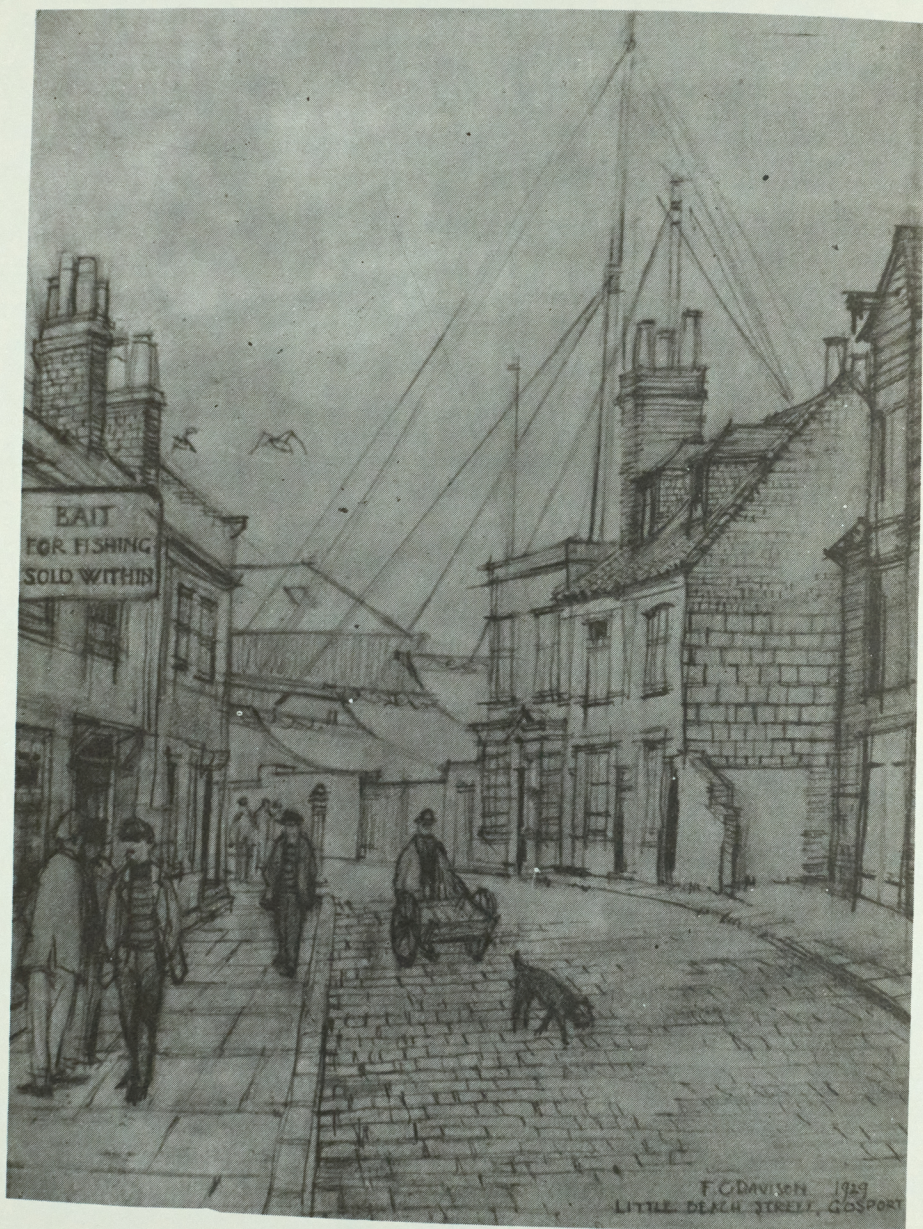
The epitome of the Gay Twenties was Miss Betty Carstairs, a trim, boyish American heiress whose bright red sports car was a familiar sight in Gosport during the season. Charles Nicholson built her schooner 'Sonia II' in 1930. At that time it was one of a very few yachts to be fitted out with a fully equipped gymnasium.

Over the years a cottage industry grew up in Gosport around the yachting set. William Rowe's tailoring business clothed the yachtsmen as they did the Royal Family when afloat. Gorman's maintained a high-class grocery business fully geared to the needs of the inner man. A firm of photographers named Wests showed particular enterprise. In the early 1900's they had a yacht specially constructed for them for the sole purpose of taking action marine photographs during the racing season.

Hollywood came briefly to Gosport in the late twenties. The American film director Michael Farmer used Camper's slipway and neighbouring yachts at anchor to film exteriors for a Gloria Swanson film, the title of which is unfortunately lost. Miss Swanson herself stayed at Lee-on-the-Solent during the filming and became the target of local autograph hunters.

The public saw only the glamour and the thrills of the yachting seasons. The men who worked behind the scenes on the yachts - the shipwrights, cabinet-makers, joiners, painters and sailmakers - all were fine craftsmen in their particular line. So indeed were the captains and crews who sailed them. Among many well-known local characters perhaps Captain Fred Mountifield was typical. Hardway-born Fred will be ever associated with Lord Waring's beautiful yacht 'White Heather'. Another distinguished local skipper was Captain John Evans, who started his career as a boy with Captain Fred on 'White Heather'.

After Sir Thomas Lipton's death, the millionaire aircraft manufacturer T. O. M. Sopwith took up the America's Cup challenge on Britain's behalf. By 1934 the international yachting scene based at Gosport was poised unwittingly for its swansong. In 1933 Sopwith had made one of his customary journeys to Gosport. The following year Charles Nicholson produced what many people believed to be his masterpiece - the 'J' class all-steel cutter 'Endeavour I'. She was launched in high hopes on a sunny April day in 1934 to the accompaniment of Cup-tie strength crowds who thronged the Ferry Gardens for a grandstand view. 'Endeavour' was a tribute to the expertise



F. O. DAVISON 1929
LITTLE DEACH STREET, GOSPORT

of Gosport craftsmen as she glided majestically down the slipway. In order that the crowds might savour to the full the drama of the occasion, a microphone was fitted to a nearby raft to relay the 'swish' at the moment of her entry into the water. It was in every sense a Gosport occasion. Instead of engaging a London firm of caterers for the celebration luncheon, Lady Sopwith went instead to Mr. Meotti, whose little Swiss restaurant in the High Street was well patronised by visiting yachtsmen. Unhappily, 'Endeavour' just failed to wrest the Cup from the American challenger 'Rainbow', but the series was probably as closely fought as any in the history of the race. Gosportonians held their breath as individual results were flashed on an illuminated signboard in Ferry Gardens. Charles Nicholson was honoured by being made Freeman of the Borough and later received the O.B.E. from King George V.

There was another unsuccessful attempt in 1937 to gain the Cup with 'Endeavour II' but war clouds were gathering over Europe and the scintillating world of international yachting would never be the same again.

Nowadays a stroll along the Hard gives little indication of these former glories. Camper and Nicholson's second slipway and laying-up yard stood approximately where the bus station stands. The bowsprits of the yachts formed a triumphal arch as they reached across to the upper storeys of the little Beach Street dwellings. 'Stanley House', the historic eighteenth century home of the founder Benjamin Nicholson, was pulled down in the sixties to make way for the high-rise flats. Ratsey and Lapthorns have crossed the Solent to Cowes. Messrs. Rowes, Gormans and Wests have disappeared. The Swiss Restaurant still stands, but forlorn and empty.

Skyscrapers may indeed be no substitute for the indefinable glamour of narrow little streets dominated by the masts and riggings of beautiful, ornate yachts, yet the crafts and skills which produced them are still with the people of the town. As such, they are a fitting epitaph to Gosport's great days of yachting fame, but how much longer will these crafts remain? When the proposed Marina becomes a reality, perhaps once again Gosport may recapture something of the flavour of its glorious past.

SOURCES

- "Great Years in Yachting" by J. W. Nicholson, Nautical Publishing Co. Ltd. Lymington (1970).
- "The America's Cup" by Ernie Bradford.
- "Sacred Cowes" by Anthony Heckstall-Smith.
- Personal reminiscences of Mr. and Mrs. S. Cribb, Capt. J. Evans, Mr. D. Houston, the late Mr. S. Lapthorn and Mr. W. Matthews.

SOURCES

COVER Aquatint, with additional hand colouring, from water-colour by W. H. Pyne, engraved by Smart and Hunt, reproduced by courtesy of the Director of Portsmouth City Museums. From Social Club, No. 3, 1822, Brit. Mus. c.119.h.16.

THE INNS OUTSIDE THE RAMPARTS Mr. A. J. Miles, Mr. M. Bryan, Estates Office Messrs. Brickwoods Ltd., Captain G. Civil, Councillor M. W. Hampson, Old Rate Records, Tithe Map for 1841, Records of the Alverstoke Leet, Directories from 1798, Old Deeds in possession of Historic Society and/or Gosport Borough Council, and many senior citizens.

DEFENCE OF STOKES BAY AGAINST THE SPANISH ARMADA (1) Public Record Office SP. 12/210 Item 39 (a few commas which are particularly confusing have been omitted); (2) SP. 12/211 Item 4; (3) J. R. Dasent, Acts of the Privy Council, New Series, XV; (4) SP. 12/211 Item 69. Facsimile and transcripts of Crown-copyright records in the Public Record Office appear by permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office.

HISTORIC HOMES - BURY HALL A Naval Biographical Dictionary by W. R. O'Byrne published 1849, 4th Edition of Burke's Landed Gentry pages 1238-40, Directories from 1784, Census Returns 1851/61, Tithe May 1841, Bury Hall Sale Catalogue and picture 1878, Home Guard and A.R.P. Records, God's Port Housing Society, Borough Council Minutes, Portsmouth Evening News, Gerald Stalkartt, Esq., Miss E. Rowden and several senior citizens of Alverstoke.

NOTE: There is an old legend which reports a tunnel from Bury Hall to Bay House and Bury House. During the war a search was made in view of the importance of such a find should guerrilla warfare become necessary but nothing was found and it is obvious that the close proximity of the River Alver to Bay House and of the creek to Bury House would have made any tunnel impractical. Similar stories are often told about old houses. Usually such "tunnels" were unromantic sewers.

THE BLIGH TOMB AT ALVERSTOKE Inscriptions on Bligh, Carter and Curry tombs. Brit. Mus. Egerton MS 2364 fo. 200 (transcript of inscription). Faculty. Alverstoke and Holy Trinity parish registers and sextons' books. Wills of Richard Rodney and George Miller Bligh, proved PCC 19 July 1821 and 2 January 1835. PRO. ADM. 1/1506 Part 1, Letters to Admiralty from J. and R. R. Bligh, 1790. PRO. ADM. 36/808, 809, 813, 475, ADM. 107/3 fo. 365 (Richard B.). Records at R. Clarence Yard (F. Stephens). National Maritime Museum, Commissioned Sea Officers, 1660-1815. Steel's Navy Lists (F. Stephens). Dictionary of National Biography (R. R. Bligh and Lord Rodney; for the latter cf. W. L. Clowes, R.N. History, Vol. II, 1898, pp 234, 235). J. Ralph, Naval Biography, 1828, Vol. 2, p.517 (R.R.B.); Vol. 4, p.261 (J. B. junior and relationships). J. Marshall, R.N. Biography, 1823-35, Vol. 1, Part 2, p.813 (J. B. junior and relationships); Vol. 2, Part 2, p.700 (C. Carter); Supplement, Part 1, p.430 (G.M.B.). W. R. O'Byrne. Naval Biographical Dictionary, 1849 (G. Johnson and C. Carter). George Mackaness, Life of Vice-Admiral William Bligh, Sydney, 1951. W. Berry, Hampshire Pedigrees, 1833, p.139 (Worsley). Gentleman's Magazine, 1795, Part 1, p.171 (J.B. senior); 1821, Part 1, p.468 (R.R.B.); March 1835 (G.M.B.). Naval Chronicle, Vol. 4, p.168 (R.R.B.). Hampshire Telegraph, 28 December 1807 (F. Stephens). Hampshire Chronicle 7 and 14 May 1810 (Curry) and 14 May 1821 (R.R.B.). Fareham Past and Present, II, II p.18 (R.R.B. and F. Stevens). Harleian Soc., Vol. 35, Hants Allegations of Marriage Licences (Richard B., R.R.B.). Universal British Directory, 1792 (R.R.B., Titcher). Cunningham's Directory of Southampton, 1811 (R.R.B.). Pigot's Directory, 1830 (Driffild). Arthur Mee, Hampshire with I.O.W., 1967, p.14 (G.M.B.). Portrait R.R.B. by courtesy of the Trustees British Museum.

The author has placed in the Society's records and in the Portsmouth City Record Office a genealogical appreciation of the relationship of Vice-Admiral William Bligh and the Alverstoke Blighs.

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