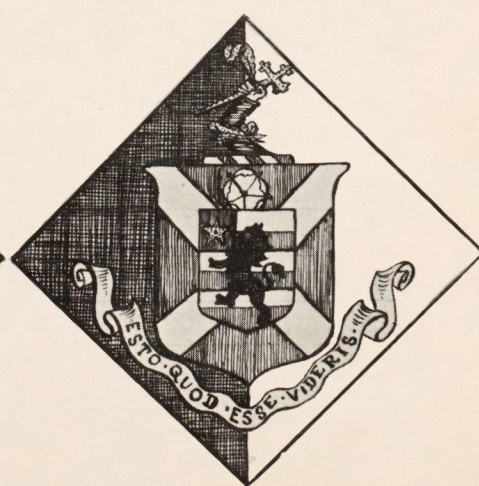
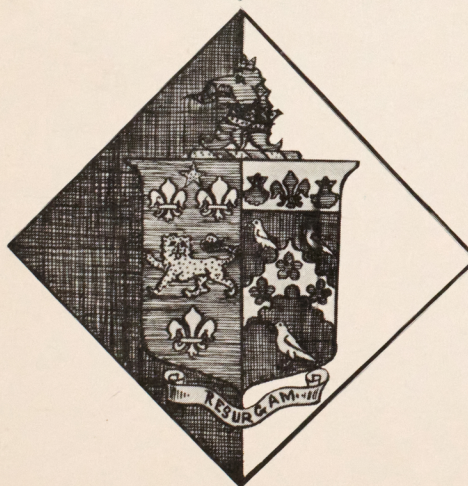
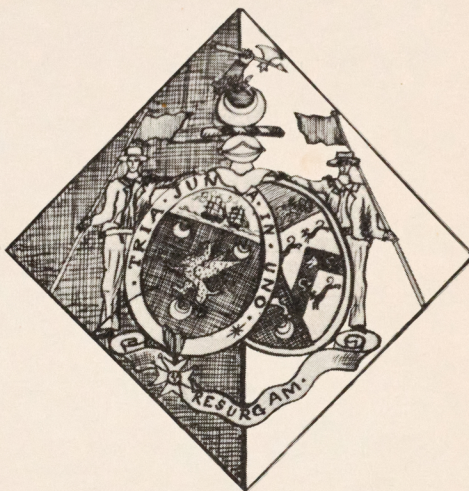
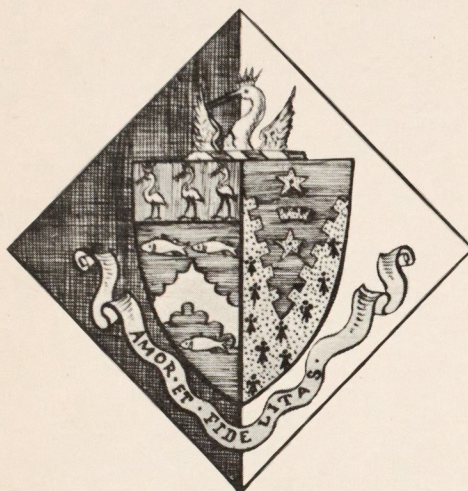




Issue No. 8

# GOSPORT RECORDS



Hatchments formerly in Alverstoke Church (see page 4)

PRICE 20p



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## Foreword

Our present thoughts, actions and way of life are in part moulded by our environment and our past. Interest in local history often begins as an exercise in quaint nostalgia or pious affection. There is the romance associated with old buildings in the vicinity and the curiosity about the people who used to live in them. To some extent this is a reaction to the apparent dullness and dreariness of contemporary society. A sentimental interest in former times is not in itself condemned. But the serious study of local history demands and contains a far more rewarding *raison d'etre*.

The past is important because a sense of continuity is necessary to us. For example, the distinctive contribution that Gosport has for centuries made to the victualling of the Royal Navy is still of social and economic significance to the area. All people are conditioned by certain incunabula of cultural and individual orientation. All buildings, whether old or new, tell a true story of life since they were devised to serve and symbolise human use.

To a great extent the value of a local historian's work depends on the way his researches illumine developing trends in the wider sphere. Just as no man can be an island unto himself, so no borough can be a peninsula unto itself. The article in this issue about a former Gosport church portrays a pattern of social cohesion common in an urban parish until the 1930s and poses the questions for the future when such a society disintegrates. Through its lectures and its written publications, the Gosport Historic Records and Museum Society seeks to take an analytical approach to the local situation and evaluate its significance in the broader spectrum of life.

John R. Capper



## Dr. L. F. W. White, O.B.E., B.Sc.(Econ)., Barrister-at-Law

With the death of Dr. Leonard White on 9th September, 1973 we have suffered great loss. Public tribute has already been paid to his great work in the field of education. Rather would I write of his love for the Borough which was evident in the services which he gave so freely to the community. He had that rare quality of inspiring enthusiasm in others. He was not a native of Gosport but he came to know more of our history than most of us who were born here. His knowledge, advice, and literary ability were always at the command of this magazine, and his book 'The Story of Gosport', which he wrote with Captain G. Civil, was the first to be written about our local history for many years. He waited a long time before it made a profit which he then characteristically gave away.

With myself he founded the Historic Society. I shall not forget the inaugural meeting because for once Dr. White's usual optimism underestimated the result. With his flair for aiding informal discussion he arrived armed with two bottles of sherry and stated that he hoped we might get about 30 people. Many will remember that the room was packed to the doors and what happened to the sherry we never knew.

He was the 'father' of the Bury House Community Centre. Here again many others helped but none will deny that he was the mastermind behind that magnificent project. When I was Mayor in 1956 he urged upon me the necessity for sponsoring his idea of the Gosporters, of which he became the first Chairman, and which has since raised over £27,000 for charity as well as providing enjoyment for thousands.

As a Local Government Officer his wise counsel in Committee was invaluable as he had that great gift of being able to sum up the most difficult and abstruse problems in a few simple words. It is one of the truest of sayings - that we only get from the world what we give to it - and proof of this was shown by the tributes paid by the townspeople at his funeral. Councillors, teachers, Rotarians, and representatives of every Public Body in the town crowded to pay their respects. His death has left a gap which can never quite be filled. As we say farewell let us determine that in our gratitude we shall not forget the inspiration he implanted in us.

H. Trevor Rogers



## Hatchments formerly in Alverstoke Church

by G. H. Williams, CBE.

When one of the gentry died, it used to be a normal practice to paint his armorial bearings on a "hatchment" of conventional design and hang it for a period on the front of his residence. It might then be placed permanently in his church. Large square hatchments, placed with one diagonal vertical, may still be seen in many churches.

In the British Museum there is a record of coats of arms in Hampshire churches made by A. J. Jewers between 1863 and 1875 (1). It includes a sketch, reproduced on the cover, of four hatchments in Alverstoke church; they have since disappeared.

The fine parallel lines, etc., are a conventional way of indicating the colouring of the originals: vertical for red; horizontal for blue; cross-hatched for black; dotted for gold; and plain for silver, white, or the natural colours of the objects represented.



St. Mary's Church 1724 - 1831



In families entitled to arms, a man's paternal arms normally appear on the dexter side of the shield and his wife's on the sinister. (As a shield is described from the user's point of view, the dexter side is on the observer's left.) Above is placed the crest which in theory is worn on the helmet. The helmet itself is sometimes shown, as in the top right hatchment. It will be seen that all four of these hatchments have shield and crest, with the dexter background black and the sinister white. This means that the hatchment is that of a man leaving a widow. If his wife had died first, the background of his hatchment would be all black. A wife dying and leaving a widower would have the dexter background white, the sinister background black and no crest. A widow's hatchment would have the arms of herself and of her late husband on a diamond-shaped "lozenge", not on a shield, with the background all black and no crest (2).

Two of the hatchments bear the word RESURGAM - "I shall arise". Such expressions relating to death or resurrection are quite usual. The other two bear what appear to be family mottoes, meaning "Love and faithfulness" and "Be what you seem to be". Such family mottoes are less common on hatchments, but where they occur they might be a help in identifying the families; in these two cases they are not. Fortunately all the four hatchments sketched can be identified by the arms alone (3).

The top left hatchment is that of James Palmer Hobbs, who was a banker of Bond Street, Westminster, later lived at Southampton and at West Cowes, and died at Tunbridge Wells in 1823. By his own wish he was buried in the Hobbs family grave under the centre aisle of Alverstoke church. The top-stone of this grave is now at the west end of the north aisle, having presumably been moved there when the nave was rebuilt in 1885. Five small brasses in memory of James Palmer Hobbs and of his grandfather, mother, uncle and sister are let into the stone.

The grandfather Palmer Hobbs and the uncle Thomas Hobbs were both ships' carpenters. (In the days of wooden ships, carpenters were comparable with the engineers of today.) Thomas died in 1746 and was buried in the churchyard, but three months later was moved into the grave in the church, which already contained the remains of Sampson Man. The other four Hobbses were later buried in the same grave.

The sexton's descriptions of the position of the grave are interesting. The grandfather was buried "½ way up the middle alley of the church" and the sister's "feet 7 feet West the Reading Desk in the middle Isle of the Church". A plan of the pre-1863 church shows that there were no steps between the nave and chancel and that there were family pews in the chancel beyond the combined pulpit and reading desk, an arrangement still existing in Southwick church. Thus the middle aisle ran from the west end almost to the sanctuary steps, and on this plan the sexton's two descriptions of the position of the grave would agree. We do not know the pre-1832 layout, but it was probably similar.



**JAMES PALMER  
HOBBS ESQ.<sup>R</sup>  
*WHO DIED AT*  
**TUNBRIDGE WELLS**  
*12<sup>TH</sup> NOV<sup>R</sup> 1825*  
**IN HIS 71<sup>ST</sup> YEAR.****

Brass of J. P. Hobbs

James Palmer Hobbs's grandmother was a niece of Capt. Henry Player, of Weevil House, on the site of which the Royal Clarence Yard was built. He was a churchwarden in 1687 and presented to the church a flagon, with his arms on it, which they still have. He was one of the prime movers in the building of Holy Trinity Church.

James Palmer Hobbs's father, Capt. James Hobbs, RN, was one of the Trustees appointed by the Act of 1762/3 for paving the streets of Gosport, but died overseas and is not commemorated on the stone.

James Palmer Hobbs married Mary, sister of George Townsend Walker, who distinguished himself in the Peninsular War and was made a baronet. The dexter arms were formerly used by Hibbs, but are here used by Hobbs. The sinister arms are those of Walker (4).

It seems likely that the present Hobbs Passage, running through the Co-op Clothing and Furnishing Store, was named after Hobbs Brewery, which may have been near by in its early stages, or after Thomas Hobbs, who was publican of the Plough in High Street in 1784. It is not clear whether the various Hobbs families were related.

The bottom left hatchment is that of Rev. Charles Augustus North, Rector of Alverstoke 1809-1825.

The Church at that time was afflicted with nepotism and plurality. Lord North, the Prime Minister, caused his half-brother Brownlow North to become a bishop at the age of 30 and Bishop of Winchester at the age



of 40. Brownlow North's son Charles Augustus was born in June, 1785. In 1809 his father ordained him as deacon in March and as priest in June, and appointed him as Rector of Alverstoke in June and additionally Rector of Havant in July. In 1812 he became also a Prebendary of Winchester.

The Rector's son, another Brownlow North, had an even more remarkable career. At the age of 7 he became Registrar of the Diocese. He engaged in heavy gambling and dissipation up to the age of 44, when he underwent a religious conversion. He then became a celebrated evangelical lay preacher (5).

Incidentally, C. A. North's immediate predecessor as Rector of Alverstoke, Thomas Garnier, was Bishop Brownlow North's son-in-law's brother, and was Rector of Alverstoke and of Bishopstoke at the same time. He was later Dean of Winchester, and by a curious coincidence died within a month of the death of Samuel Wilberforce, Bishop of Winchester and previously Rector of Alverstoke (6).

The star on C. A. North's arms indicates that he was a third son. He married Rachel Jarvis, whose arms appear on the sinister side. He died in 1825, and the sexton recorded his burial in the words "Charles Augustus North in a Vault under the Communion Peavement". Jewers's manuscript records, in addition to the hatchment, a monument to him in the church, but this has disappeared.

The top right hatchment is that of Adm. Sir Richard Rodney Bligh, who was described at length in Gosport Records No. 7. He became a Knight Grand Cross of the Order of the Bath in 1820 and died in 1821. He was entitled to put the motto of the Order, TRIA IUNCTA IN UNO, round his shield and to suspend from it the badge of the Order. (The motto, meaning "Three joined in one", is supposed to refer to Faith, Hope and Charity joined in Charity (7).) But as his wife was not a member of the Order he could not include her arms in this arrangement, and they are therefore shown with his own on a separate shield. An earlier wife had died, and it would have been normal practice to show her arms as well on the sinister side of his shield, with the adjacent background black; it was presumably thought that this would make the hatchment impossibly complicated, but the omission is unfortunate as she came of a distinguished family, Worsley of the Isle of Wight.

As G.C.B., Sir Richard was also entitled to use supporters, and accordingly the College of Arms gave him a grant of these, the two sailors with flags. At the same time they allowed him to make other additions to his family arms (8). The extent of these additions can be seen by a comparison with the arms on the tomb of his relative William Bligh (of the Bounty) at Lambeth and with those shown in the books for the Cornish Blighs (9). These earlier arms comprise a griffin (a monster with an eagle's head and talons and a lion's rear legs and tail) between three crescents, and as a crest an arm (or part of an arm) holding a battle axe. Sir Richard has added to the shield a naval coronet between the griffin's claws and at the top a naval scene (which may represent an actual incident); in the crest he has



made the arm come out of a crescent and surrounded it with a garland.

Jewers added a note to the sketch, to the effect that the shield was so dark that he could not distinguish its main colour; he had represented this as black but it should probably be blue. (It is blue in the Bligh family arms.) The note also mentions the naval coronet, indistinguishable in the sketch.

While on the subject of changes in arms, I may mention that there is a curious example still in the church. On the wall of the north aisle near the west end is a monument (also sketched by Jewers) to W. H. Langtry, who was Master of HMS Ringdove in Far Eastern waters. There were added to his family arms a circle with the word CHINA and a bird which looks like a ringdove.

Sir Richard's widow's maiden name was Golightly. The arms on the sinister side of the sinister shield were granted to a John Golightly in 1558 (10). The three animals are running greyhounds, and are probably a pun on the name. (Incidentally, a family from whom I am descended also had three greyhounds on their shield; their name was Mauleverer, which in Norman-French means a bad hunter of hares.) The object in the centre of the chevron was originally a horse collar with a crown, but Jewers probably did not know what it was intended to be.



Arms on Langtry Monument



Finally, the bottom right hatchment can be easily identified as that of William Curry, who died at Southampton in 1810, as the shield appears on his monument under the tower. His father Thomas also has a monument with a shield there.

The early history of the Curry family is at present obscure, and further research might be interesting. There is a series of references, covering most of the 18th century, to local rope-makers of that name. A map of 1800 shows "Mr. Curry's Rope Walk" along the water-front of Coldharbour and to the north (11). A Thomas Curry, merchant, was a Trustee under the Act of 1762/3. Anyhow, the Thomas Curry with whom we are concerned was a magistrate; in 1791, in partnership with his eldest son Thomas, he set up a banking business in Gosport (12). The family residence was in Coldharbour (13), where Sir R. R. Bligh also lived.

The younger Thomas died in 1795 and was buried in a chest tomb, near the later Bligh one, in Alverstoke churchyard. His widow married a Samuel Jellicoe, probably the partner of Henry Cort the ironfounder (14). The elder Thomas died in 1803 and was buried in the same tomb.

William Curry was in practice in Southampton as a solicitor by 1803. He was Town Clerk there from 1804 till his death in 1810. He was buried in the Alverstoke tomb. He had lived in Southampton High Street, on the site of the present G.P.O. (15) but he owned another house in that town which Adm. Sir Richard Rodney Bligh bought from his executors and lived in till his own death (16).

William Curry's wife's arms, which appear to be those of Wasse, are placed not on the sinister side of the shield as usual but on a smaller shield in the middle. This signifies that she was an "heir-ess", which means, roughly, that she had no brothers to inherit her father's arms. Her lion on her husband's monument has something round its neck, probably a crown, which Jewers has missed.

The crest, a right arm with a cloth tied round it and holding a cross and plume, appears in Jewers's sketches of the two monuments, but is not on either of them now. The crests may have been destroyed when the tower was built in 1904/5.

The amount of local history which can be linked with this simple sketch of four hatchments illustrates the importance of recording monuments and other objects which are liable to disappear.



# The Building of St. George Barracks

by Roger Ivill

It is said that had it not been for a mix-up over the plans the long and handsome colonnades of St. George Barracks would have been erected in Hong Kong. Certainly their open aspect would have been more suited to the sub-tropical climate of that far-flung British outpost. Hong Kong's loss, however, was Gosport's gain, for these sturdy yellow-bricked buildings, completed in 1859, are a fine example of Victorian military architecture, and their inclusion in the list of the Borough's protected buildings is totally justified. Whatever the truth may be about the barracks' design, the tale is, perhaps, best left in the hands of the romantics who, no doubt, will suitably embellish it as it passes from generation to generation.

But there is another side to the story of the building of St. George Barracks which must not go untold. The contract for the job had been won by Messrs. Lucas Brothers, a Suffolk firm which, apart from building countless dwellings in Lowestoft, was also responsible for the rebuilding of the railway station at York and a part of Liverpool Street Station. It appeared to Lucas Brothers that one of the most important aspects of the work would be in ensuring prompt delivery of all the necessary building materials to the site as they were needed, thus reducing the possibility of delay in completing the contract. The majority of these materials had to be brought to the site by water and, as one would expect, there were numerous local firms who were able to provide the necessary transport for this part of the job.

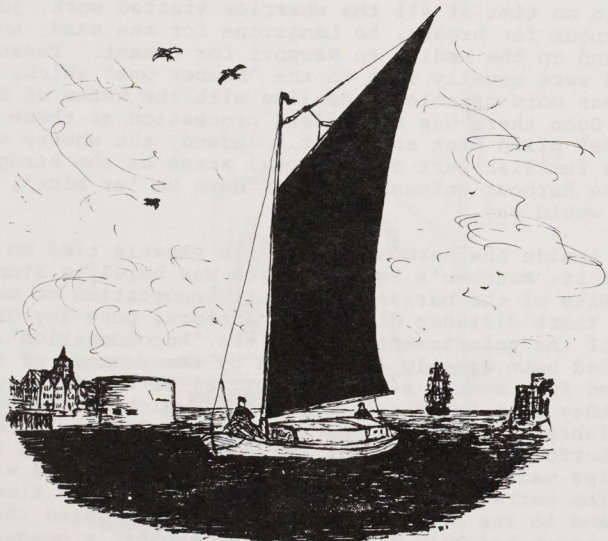
Lucas Brothers, however, were strangely reluctant to make use of local transport. Instead they opted to bring a number of Norfolk wherries on a journey of unprecedented length (for a wherry, anyway) all the way from Lowestoft round to the Solent. It is difficult to see the reasoning behind Lucas Brothers' decision, although a number of theories have been put forward. One is that the local firms were too expensive; another suggests that the Solent craft drew too much water when fully laden, whereas the Norfolk wherry had the advantage of a relatively shallow draught. Although either of these theories might have some degree of truth in them, it seems more likely that Lucas Brothers simply preferred to use craft with which they had long been associated and which had proved their reliability. It did, of course, also have the advantage of making Lucas Brothers completely independent of the local watermen, who might well have been bitter about the large and important Gosport contract not being awarded to a local firm.

Now seldom did the Norfolk wherries venture out of the broads and estuaries, and when they did it was usually only for short-haul coasting



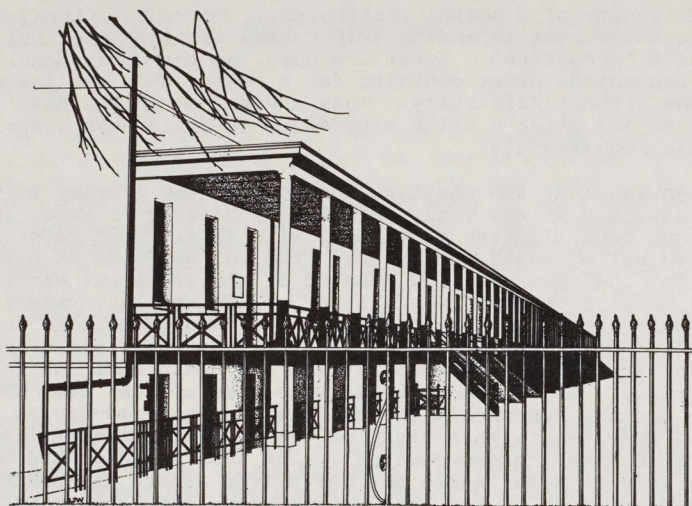
trade between Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft - trips which never exceeded the length of a normal working day. No wonder, then, that the announcement of the impending trip caused ripples of disbelief on Broadland's "grapevine". Lucas Brothers, on the other hand, were quite undaunted, never doubting for a moment that the journey could be made without difficulty. They advertised in the East Anglian press, and after a while managed to gather enough wherries to meet their requirements.

The plan was that the wherries should make the journey in two groups of four, and it was early on a Sunday morning in March 1857 that the first four, looking very smart with their fresh paint and newly-dressed sails, eased gently away from the quayside at Lowestoft and headed for the open sea. In command of the group was Martin Wigg, an experienced wherryman who was skipper of the smallest vessel, the "Mahala". The others were the "Carrow", the "Accommodation" and the "Number One". Heavy weather forced them into Harwich, where they sheltered for several days before setting out again early on the following Friday. Sailing continuously to make up lost time they reached the eastern approaches to the Solent around mid-day on Saturday. But as they came within sight of their destination at last, misfortune struck the "Accommodation". She lost a rudder and drifted towards the Isle of Wight where she was driven ashore and wrecked. Happily, however, none of the crew was injured, and later were able to rejoin their colleagues who, unable to assist them in their plight, had continued on into Portsmouth Harbour.



A Norfolk Wherry





Within no time at all the wherries started work, journeying to Southampton for breeze, to Langstone for sea sand, and across to Cowes and up the Medina to Newport for cement. These trips to the Island were usually left to the "Number One" which, being the largest, was more capable of dealing with the whims of Solent weather. Soon there was an endless procession as these three "foreigners" plied back and forth. Indeed, the wherry was quickly becoming a familiar part of the local scene as she struggled through the harbour entrance loaded "down to 'er bins", as the wherryman would say.

Once inside the harbour mouth, the vessels tied up at the wharf near St. Matthew's Square, which was barely a stone's throw from the site of the barracks. The transportation of materials over this short distance did not, therefore, pose any great problems. In spite of the unfortunate loss of the "Accommodation", Lucas Brothers had been greatly encouraged by the success of their scheme so far, and four months after the arrival of the first group of wherries they sent for the second group, which completed the journey without mishap. These were the "Star", the "Dahlia", the "Wellington" and the "Norfolk Hero Senior". With the fleet now up to full strength the wherries made themselves busy, fetching materials with even greater speed as the barracks began to take shape. By this time the crews were getting used to the strange new equipment with which they had to deal, for each wherry had been fitted with an anchor, a compass, port and starboard lights, extra stays for the sail, and many other necessary attachments - a far cry indeed from life on the Broads, when the



wherry simply pulled over to the bank and tied up at the end of each working day. The wherry-men, too, had become accomplished seamen - as good, in fact, as many of the local watermen.

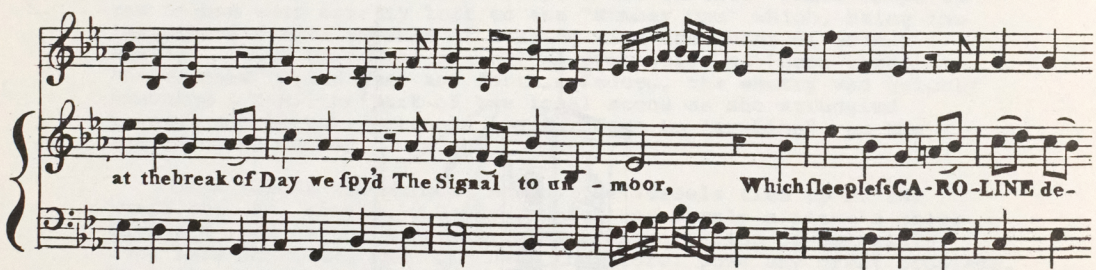
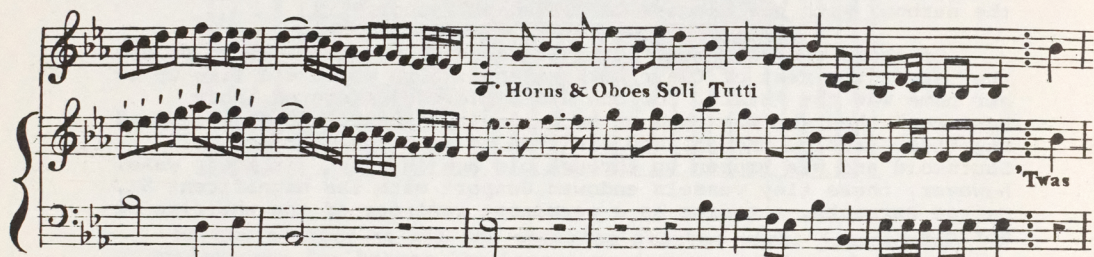
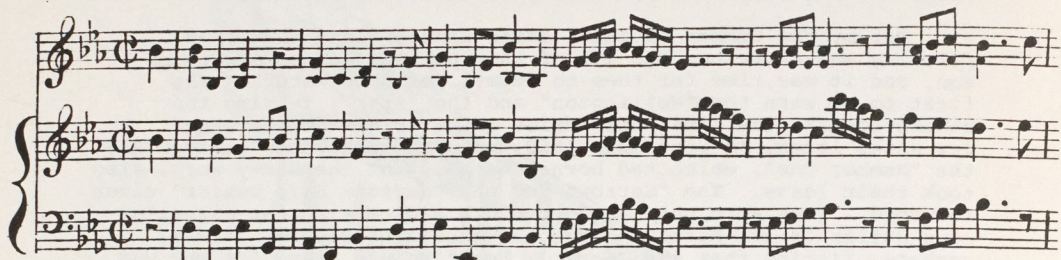
But by the Summer of 1858, after fifteen long months of fetching and carrying, the job of the wherries was coming to an end, and it was time for them to depart for home waters. The first to go were the "Wellington" and the "Star", leaving the others to make the final deliveries of materials to the wharf. A few weeks later, in September 1858, the "Mahala", the "Dahlia" and the "Number One", which had borne the brunt of the heavy work, also took their leave. The "Carrow" and the "Norfolk Hero Senior" never returned. They were sold at Portsmouth and carried out miscellaneous duties in the harbour for some years afterwards. It was, perhaps, fitting that the "Norfolk Hero" should stay, for she was named after Lord Nelson, and was now able to daily "rub elbows" in the harbour with her namesake's flagship "Victory".

Of those wherries that returned there is no clear record of how they spent the rest of their working days. One which did live up to her name was the "Star", for she had a fleeting taste of "show business" when she was used on occasions as a bandstand at Broadland regattas. Sadly, though, she finished up as a coal carrier at Southwold and was broken up through old age in 1911. In their wake, however, these tiny vessels endowed Gosport with the magnificent St. George Barracks, standing as a permanent reminder of the wherries of Norfolk.





# CAROLINE OF GOSPORT





Heart began to swell nor could cold fear the thought oppose of bidding me farewell Nor

could cold fear the thought oppose of bidding me farewell

Horns & Oboes Solo Tutti

2

In open Boat the Maid of worth,  
 Soon reach'd our Vessels side;  
 Soon too she found her WILLIAM'S birth  
 But fought me not to chide  
 Go, she exclaim'd, "for Fame's a cause"  
 A Female should approve,  
 For who that's true to Honor's Laws  
 Is ever false to Love.

3

"Should conquest in fair form array'd  
 "Thy Loyal efforts crown  
 "In GOSPORT will be found a Maid,  
 "That lives for thee alone:  
 May Girls with Hearts so firm and true,  
 To Love and Glory's cause;  
 Meet the reward they have in view  
 The meed of free applause.



# The Corn Mills of God's Port

by H. T. Rogers

The Mills of God are said to grind exceedingly slow, but sure. The Mills of God's Port worked exceedingly fast during the Napoleonic Wars but whether they were so sure is open to doubt as they were at the mercy of both wind and tide.

There was a shortage of grain at the time and a Royal Proclamation issued by George III on December 3rd 1800 asking families to cut consumption by one-third revealed that the average person at that time ate 6 lbs of bread a week. We can assume the population of Gosport and its villages to have been about 12,000. If we add to this the troops encamped in the area plus 4,000 prisoners of war in the French Prison at Forton and a further 5,000 incarcerated in the hulks in the harbour, all of whom were allowed a pound of bread a day plus 4 ozs of biscuits, it will be seen that a considerable amount of flour was required.

Very early maps of Gosport show a windmill at Haslar and another where St. George Barracks now stand, opposite Millard's Corn Stores (in itself an interesting old building). Both these mills have long since disappeared but it is curious how old names linger. Old residents tell me they can remember when their parents would always refer to the houses at the top end of North Street as Windmill Row.

By 1800 two windmills remained in Gosport, one near Haslar Bridge on Tragedy Bank opposite Fort Blockhouse, and the other at Anns Hill in Windmill Road. Just outside the present Gosport boundary there was a windmill on Peel Common which was not pulled down until early this century and which was used for a time as a beerhouse, and another stood near Crofton Church. Both Fareham and Portsmouth also had a number of mills.

The early windmills had been constructed facing the prevailing wind, but they were soon superseded by the Post Mill which revolved on a central vertical pivot enabling the whole structure to be trundled around as the direction of the wind changed. In later years most mills were built with a revolving top by which the sails were kept square into the wind automatically by a fantail at the rear. Some of these had sails up to 80 feet long, but even these giants were unable to operate in a dead calm. Well might the old time miller grumble that the wind only seemed to blow on Sundays and holidays.





The Mill at Anns Hill

*(From an oil painting by Martin Snape,  
by courtesy of R. D. S. Rogers, Esq.)*





Forton Watermill

*(From a painting by Alfred Snape)*

A picture by Martin Snape shows the mill at Anns Hill to have been of the fantail type. Barges filled with grain were towed up Forton Creek, which then ran through the present Forton Recreation Ground as far as the mill, and returned with flour for the Royal Navy. I have been unable to find out when this mill ceased to work and it had long been derelict when I was a boy. It was certainly in business in the middle of last century as it is recorded that a lad of 16, George Deacon, fell from the mill while attending to the sails and was seriously injured. He was buried in St. John's Churchyard in Grave No. 1 in the Church Register which states he died on June 20th 1854 "after eight months of painful suffering which he bore with Christian fortitude".

Also on Forton Creek situated at the bottom of Mill Lane at Forton was one of the last watermills in Gosport. Watermills were even older than windmills and date back to before the 11th Century, but by their very nature their sites were restricted. Where there were no rivers of any size, as in Gosport, they were operated by the incoming tide. Basically the tide coming up a creek would turn a paddle wheel which worked the mill stones. On the tide running out again the wheel would work in reverse. A water-colour painted about 1850 by Alfred Snape indicates that the Forton Mill was of this simple design - a picturesque three storey building with a central arch where the water-wheel was fixed and through which the tide flowed. Forton Barracks can be seen in the background.

Another watermill stood close to where the swimming baths now



stand. It belonged to the firm of Paul and Marsh, who also owned the windmill on Tragedy Bank. The contours of the land here are now so different that it is not possible to pin-point exactly the site, but maps of the period show that the present Model Yacht Lake, formerly known as the Cockle Pond, was in fact the original mill pond. Where a mill pond existed water would be stored up by the incoming high tide and released as required by the miller to work his mill.

In 1804, however, the Government were so alarmed at the possibility of invasion by the French that the Board of Ordnance were allowed to purchase the firm of Paul and Marsh for £3,150 and both mills were destroyed to permit the ramparts and the fortifications to be improved and extended. Evidently it was felt there were sufficient stocks of flour to cope with an emergency.

By far the most important mill in Gosport was in Clarence Yard at the bakery which produced ship's biscuits for the Navy. In 1756 it is referred to as a horsemill in which the mill stones were turned by horses harnessed to them. In 1781 so great was the faith still in water power that a Mr. Smeaton, called upon to design a new mill for Clarence Yard, expressed no faith in the new-fangled "fire-engines". They were, he said, liable to break down and leave the mill clogged with flour. Their function should be restricted to working a pump to hoist up water to a height of 34 feet at a rate of 460 cube feet a minute into a reservoir. The miller would then have proper control over a mill worked by waterpower capable of grinding 400 quarters of wheat in the course of a week.

In the early 19th Century Mr. Thomas Grant, the Superintendent of Clarence Yard, introduced a far more efficient system worked by steam power by which the corn was ground by ten pairs of stones, and the coarser bran extracted, before the flour was delivered by a continuous process into dough machines. The dough was then passed through rollers to produce hexagonal biscuits about  $\frac{3}{8}$  of an inch thick and 5 inches across. A battery of nine ovens would bake a ton of bread or 10,000 biscuits a hour. The biscuits were baked stony hard to prevent them from going mouldy, but after months at sea it was usually necessary to tap them on the table to get rid of the maggots before eating them.

The building which housed the old granary and bakery can still be seen at Clarence Yard, although the machinery was scrapped years ago. It is to be hoped that it will be preserved as the roof timbers are magnificent.

Wheat was the most favoured cereal, but rye, barley and oats were all used to make a low quality bread for poorer people. Many of the farms and larger houses still ground their own crops in querns or mill-stones worked by hand to make a coarse meal for the domestic staff. Indeed, much of the bread eaten was made at home. Pure white wheaten loaves made from wheat flour passed through fine sieves and sold by the professional baker were reserved for the gentry. To have white bread on the table was a kind of status symbol indicating wealth and substance.



The Gosport millers were lucky in that a higher proportion of wheat was grown in Hampshire than in any other County, probably owing to climatic conditions. Cobbett speaks of the whole of the southern slopes of the Portsdown Hills covered in golden grain as one of the fairest sights in all England.

When the wars ended the poorer classes began to demand whiter bread. The miller, given freedom from restrictions, was able to improve his technique by separating the offal for animal husbandry. By the middle of the 19th Century white bread for the first time became cheaper than brown.

Many old time millers could see no need for change. They were sturdy independent tradesmen whose craft had been passed down for generations. Hardworking, stern, but just, they expected the same treatment from others. Space does not permit me to dwell on the social conditions of the time but I cannot resist quoting two lines from an old milier's diary:

"I paid Tom off last week. He went on pleasure without leave."

"I took possession of his cow which was sold for the amount due."

In 1870 the introduction of roller milling and hard American Winter wheats revolutionized the industry. In less than 50 years the whole concept of grinding corn between stones, which had lasted from biblical times, disappeared almost completely. By 1920 only a few old mills were left, kept alive by the requirements of the 1914 war. Today the odd one or two in existence are looked upon as curiosities or more often turned into attractive residences.

Scarcely a memory remains in Gosport except a fine old roof in Clarence Yard, the names of two roads, and the rather grandiose Model Yacht Lake.



Windmill at Peel Common



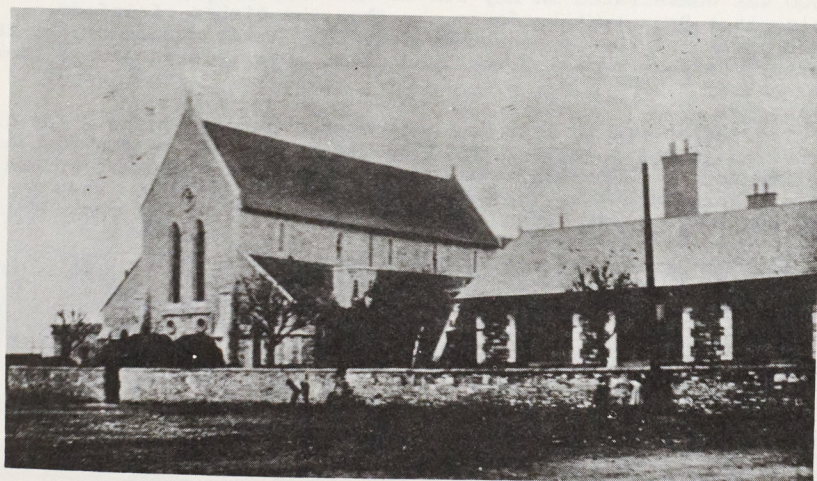
## The Parish of St. Matthew, Gosport

by C. J. Washington

The many small houses huddled in the courtyards with fascinating names such as "Black Bear Yard", "Dark Alley", "Brandy Mount" and "Griffiths Rents", as well as the larger and more elegant dwellings of Clarence Square commanding a fine view of Portsmouth Harbour, have passed into history. So, too, has the Parish of St. Matthew, Gosport, of which they were a part.

From 1696 the Church of Holy Trinity (built as a Chapel-of-Ease to the Parish of Alverstoke) had served the town area, but by 1840 the population within the ramparts had grown to over 7,000, and largely at the instigation of the Rev. Samuel Wilberforce, Rector of Alverstoke, who saw the growing need, the new Parish of St. Matthew was formed on August 8th, 1845. It comprised that part of the town north of the High Street.

The enthusiasm and generosity of Victorian church people must have been considerable. St. Matthew's school buildings were completed



St. Matthew's Church and School





St. Matthew's Square

in 1845 at a cost of £1,100. The Parish Church costing a further £4,500 was consecrated on May 6th of the following year, and it was fitting that Samuel Wilberforce, by then the Bishop of Oxford, should preach at the Consecration Service. It is recorded that the offertory on that occasion realised £115, a very large sum in those days.

The Parish was to last for just over a hundred years. Why did it come to an end in 1950 ? By 1930 the population of the town area had reduced to under 3,000, and the slum clearance started before 1939 and accelerated by the bombing during the war meant that by 1946 very few people lived there and the Parish had virtually disappeared.

Notwithstanding, St. Matthew's, although no longer a Parish Church in the true sense, continued to attract good congregations, particularly at Evensong. Support came from a wide area outside the Parish boundary and many Gosport people who preferred the evangelical form of Services were regular worshippers. The Church continued to meet this need until its closure in 1951, just five years after celebrating its centenary of Christian Worship and Witness.

For the next four years this beautiful and structurally sound stone building stood forlorn and unused, presenting a sad spectacle especially to those who had worshipped there and shared the joys and comfort of its spiritual and social life. Distressing demolition came in February 1955.



Great efforts to save this venerable building were to no avail. The suggestion to dismantle and re-erect at Bridgemary was deemed too costly and the ideas to use it for educational and cultural purposes (such as a museum or art gallery) were not acceptable. The work and effort of a hundred years to preserve and beautify this Church thus ended with bulldozers and rubble. The buildings of Viking Marine now occupy the site.

The Church records are not without interest. Entries in early Baptismal Registers give parents' trades that have now disappeared. There were cordwainers, rope-makers, grooms, coachmen, water-carriers and watermen. Two water-carriers had children christened in 1848 and 1853, but there were no such entries after 1858 when the Waterworks Company was formed. The last Baptism of a waterman's child was recorded on July 15th 1902 when Joseph and Eliza Redman not only presented their newly born son, but also their five other children with ages ranging from two to eleven years. In 1859 about 400 watermen had lived in the area.

The story of St. Matthew's is found in the record of faithful service of seven Vicars. The first, the Rev. Joseph De Lasaux Simmonds (1846-1848) introduced the "Old Protestant" or "Low Church" form of worship for which the Church became renowned, and only during the last thirty years of its life did some change occur. The Vicar christened two of his daughters (1846 and 1848) including his unusual second name "De Lasaux" for both of them.



St. Matthew's Vicarage (No. 3) and Coldharbour House (No. 5) on Clarence Square



Then followed the long association of the Tanner family with St. Matthew's. Inducted in 1849, the Rev. James Tanner remained till his death in 1888. He was succeeded by his son, the Rev. Charles Tanner who had served as his father's curate since 1874. In turn, Charles had his son, the Rev. Henry Tanner, as curate from 1908-1912 and again from 1915-1920, when the family's long service to the Parish terminated, Charles retiring, and Henry later becoming Vicar of St. Luke's, Southsea.

James Tanner lived at Forton Lodge (now adjoining Young's Garage in Forton Road) where he enjoyed a large garden stretching down to the creek. Parham Road now occupies the site. In 1889 No. 3 Clarence Square was acquired as a Vicarage for Charles Tanner, but after short occupation he moved into No. 5 (Coldharbour House). No. 3 again became the Vicarage in 1920 when the Rev. E. C. A. Kent was appointed to the living.

Sombre tradition continued throughout the Tanner regime. The Vicar dressed in black gown with black gloves preached from a black pulpit; neither Cross nor flowers adorned the altar which had a dark red plush frontal for all occasions; there was no surpliced choir. Two concessions, however, were made in 1891. A beautiful brass eagle lectern, the gift of Mr. J. H. Spencer, was placed in the centre of the chancel, and a fine organ (by Norman and Beard of Norwich) was installed in the gallery at the west end.

Mr. J. H. Spencer, donor of the lectern, deserves mention. He was Churchwarden for fifty years (1890-1940) serving four Vicars, the Revs. Charles Tanner, E. C. A. Kent, Denis James and W. A. Parker. In addition to Church work Mr. Spencer served Gosport well, being a member of the Urban District Council (1908-1920) and of the Gosport Education Committee (1908-1940).

Installation of the organ resulted from the efforts of a Curate who was in the Parish for just a year. He was the Rev. H. Brown Gold, who organised a bazaar in the Thorngate Hall to raise the £400 required. Before the Church was demolished an organist, Mr. Derek Fry, dismantled this instrument and installed it in St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Portsmouth.

The Rev. E. C. A. Kent inducted in December 1920 reoccupied the Vicarage No. 3 Clarence Square, by now in a somewhat less salubrious area. For the next ten years the Vicar and his wife achieved much for which they are remembered. A new Parish Hall catered for organisations and social activities which brought some light and happiness to many living in what could now be called a poor Parish. Money was raised for repairs to Church fabric and installation of a new heating system. With considerable tact and ability the Vicar surmounted considerable opposition to move away from the "very low" tradition of his predecessors.

A brass Cross (another gift of Mr. J. H. Spencer) appeared on the Altar now adorned by seasonal frontals. The choir wore surplices and





E. Rose G. Groves M. Collins  
 J. H. Washington T. A. Gibbons G. C. Gibbons W. Arnold J. Dore A. Jesty  
 S. Mason M. Morris L. Mason W. Carter C. J. Washington E. Fox W. Roberts R. Sims  
 F. Costin A. Cresdee Milton Bill, FRCO The Rev. E. C. A. Kent J. G. Turner G. Gamblin D. Corney G. A'Court  
 under the direction of Mr. Milton Bell music brightened the Services.  
 Psalms, previously said, were chanted, and anthem and cantata work  
 performed at festivals reached a high standard.

St. Matthew's choir is synonymous with the name Gibbons. Mr. George C. J. Gibbons, remembered for his powerful bass voice, sang as boy and man for 74 years, while his son, Bert, had been a choir member for over 60 years when the Church closed - surely an outstanding record of faithful service.

The Vicar and Mrs. Kent left for Petersfield in 1930 with the deep affection of a large congregation. Their good work was continued by the new incumbent, the Rev. Denis James. In addition to major repairs costing £3,000 the Church was beautified considerably. A stained glass east window was dedicated in memory of Miss Harriet Ada Cootes (who for many years kept a well known toy shop in North Cross Street); a new oak pulpit (a thankoffering from Mr. and Mrs. Tillman) and a Processional Cross (the gift of Mrs. Blackmore) were provided. The window and Cross are now at St. Faith's Church in Tribe Road.

Denis James was also responsible for building a new Vicarage in Spring Garden Lane. Demolished by a bomb in August 1940, it was rebuilt and is now the Vicarage for St. John's, Forton.

This Vicar's outstanding ministry was greatly assisted by the untiring and selfless service of Miss Wollaston, who many older residents will remember with deep affection. In 1937 Mr. James moved to Retford and after the war became Archdeacon of Barnstaple. His



successor at St. Matthew's was the Rev. W. A. Parker, who as Chaplain to the Forces, was called up in 1939.

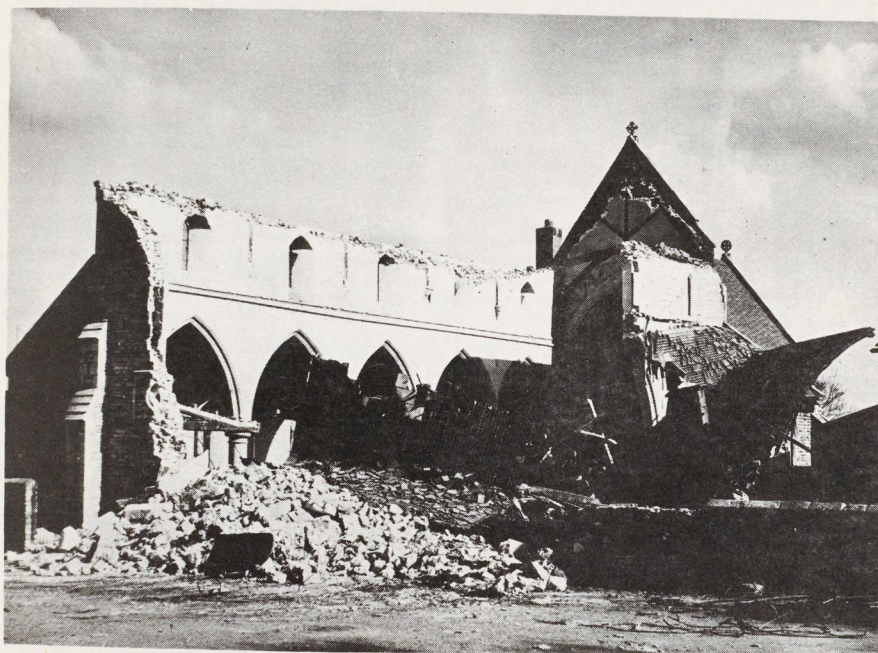
The Church was closed at the outbreak of war until August 1940, when the Vicar returned, invalided from the Army. Almost immediately his Vicarage was destroyed, and although a sick man working under great difficulties, he reopened the Church and reorganised many Parish activities. The Rev. W. A. Parker is remembered as an outstanding preacher and his advancement in the Church came as no surprise to those who were privileged to know him. Leaving Gosport in April 1942 for the living of St. Chad, Shrewsbury, he later became Archdeacon of Stafford and Bishop of Shrewsbury.

The Rev. L. G. Forrest, the last Vicar to be appointed, gave devoted service in the manner of his predecessors for the remainder of the difficult war years. In May 1946 he had the joy of leading the St. Matthew's centenary celebrations in the presence of the Bishop of Portsmouth (the Rt. Rev. Dr. W. Anderson), the Mayor and Mayoress of Gosport and a large congregation.

Within two years Mr. Forrest had accepted the living of Cherry Hinton, Cambridge, and St. Matthew's people learned with foreboding that no successor would be appointed. The writing was on the wall, but hope still fought the rumours and questions of uncertainty. The inevitable blow came with the announcement that, by Order of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, the Parish of St. Matthew, Gosport, would cease to exist on December 18th, 1950.







Demolition March 1955

The last Evensong was held on Sunday, January 14th 1951. For many it was an emotional experience. Among the large congregation led by the Mayor and Mayoress of Gosport (Councillor and Mrs. C. B. Osborn) were people who had worshipped in the Church since childhood. For them it marked the end of a chapter in their lives, as indeed it marked the end of a chapter in the story of Gosport.

Before Canon C. L. T. Barclay (Vicar of Holy Trinity, and Priest-in-Charge) pronounced the Blessing the congregation sang the Te Deum "In thankfulness and praise for the Work and Witness done and made by St. Matthew's and its people since the Consecration on May 6th, 1846".



## SOURCES

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A.S.E. Hampshire Genealogical Society has recently been formed and has several Gosport members. It will publish a quarterly journal, and among other activities hopes to record tombstone inscriptions. Persons interested are invited to get in touch with Mr. Michael Walcot, 46 Park Road, Purbrook, Portsmouth, PO7 5ES, telephone Waterlooville 2378.



Recently published by The Gosport Historic Records and Museum Society:

"The Earlier Fortifications of Gosport"

by G. H. Williams, C.B.E., M.A.

56 Pages. 47 Illustrations. Price 50p.

In the above publication are additional illustrations of Gosport Mills (see page 16 of this issue of Gosport Records). The cover picture shows the windmill at Haslar; Figs. 11, 29 and 32 show the windmill on Tragedy Bank, and Fig. 19 shows "Windmill Feild" near the present Clarence Road.

Editor.