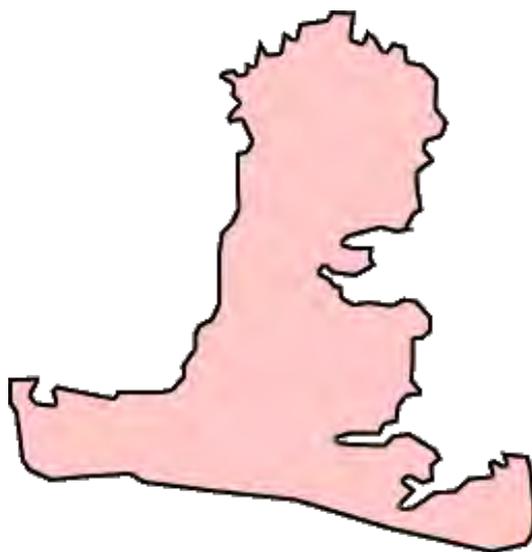


A Collection of Articles
on Hayling Island
(Island of the Holy Grail)
by
Victor Glyn Pierce Jones



Volume 1

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Hayling's Distant Past Revealed on the Beach

An Early History

In the late eighteenth century a project was launched by a Reverend William Bingley for Hampshire clergy to write histories of their parishes, to be collated and published as a *History of Hampshire*. On Hayling the work fell to the vicar from 1745 to 1773, Revd Isaac Skelton. He seems to have been more academic than religious and spent most of his time as head of a grammar school in Havant. He neglected St Mary's Church. The pews were described as falling to powder with dry rot, some of the paving inside 'gone entirely'. Some work was done on the local history project but it was lain aside'. In 1817 Henry Skelton, perhaps Isaac's son or grandson, published what research had been done in a *A Topographical Account of the Hundred of Bosmere*. It features extracts about life on Hayling, Havant and Warblington. About ten years ago a Mr Findon found a copy of this book at a jumble sale in Warminster. It was about to be thrown away. Fortunately, Mr Findon knew Hayling and, recognising its value, he sent it to me. In 1826 an updated version of the book was published by another Isaac Skelton which was reprinted by Frank Westwood for his bookshop in Petersfield. This is an extract from the 1817 edition:

The common people met with too much encouragement to resist the employment of smuggling. Because of the proximity of the Isle of Wight, 'that hot-bed of illegal traffic' Hayling has 'ever been found a receptacle' for contraband articles. The teas, brandies, wines, geneva (gin) and tobacco were kept in caverns (presumably dug out of the sand dunes) in South Hayling. About five times a year they were emptied, the goodies taken to the 'impenetrable woods' round Rowlands Castle for distribution, using where possible the deep drainage ditches for cover. Finer sorts of contraband, such as silk, were kept in secret recesses in the smugglers' own or neighbours' dwellings, most commonly the latter. Master smugglers organized ships to be beached at secret times and places. A message went out and people flocked to form a chain to the caverns for speedy unloading. These might have been at least a hundred metres long, possibly much longer. Since the total population of Hayling in 1811 was only 324, (Island total 576) and there were only 56 houses in South Hayling (Island total 98) most families

must have been involved. Help came from surprising quarters e.g. the prison hulks near the mouth of Langstone Harbour, secretly put lanterns out to guide the smugglers' boats.

Informers got very rough justice. In 1747 a cargo was impounded and taken to the customs house in Poole. Local smugglers were furious. Sixty men from Warblington and district rode down to 'liberate' the tea and brought it back to Rowlands Castle. A Daniel Chater was overheard in a pub boasting he could identify one of the smugglers. On his way to a magistrate in Chichester he stopped at The White Hart in Rowlands Castle and was brutally murdered. The five ring leaders were hung in chains and the tea was recovered. After the war against Napoleon 1815 ex-servicemen were brought in to become much tougher Revenue officers, ending the glory days!

The book explains why Islanders thought nothing wrong in smuggling. They felt excluded from the mainland and got little support from authorities. There were eighteen fishing boats on Hayling but fish in Langstone Harbour, once a great resource for the poor, was carried away by 'stranger fishermen' before it reached maturity. Oyster beds were raided by as many as fifty smacks in a season, some from as far away as Whitstable. These could take six or seven 'drags' each of seven hundred marketable oysters at one time.

There were only eighteen farmers on the Island, a fraction of the number a century later. The fields were badly drained and there was a lot of neglected land despite the supply of manure from Portsmouth in great abundance. Average weekly wages were eighteen shillings (90p). Other work was making bricks and at the salterns. The latter jobs included boiling sea water to get sea salt – hours spent in terribly hot, steamy sheds – which many people couldn't stand. Health on Hayling was not good. The 'lower orders' suffered from typhus, in one case because the sewage from one cottage drained directly into the neighbour's. Marriage guidance was primitive. In Havant about 1590 Mrs Eleonora Baron was sentenced to the ducking stool for being a 'scold'. After three 'splashes' she was declared incorrigible. The ducking stool fell into decay and residents were fined 40 shillings (£2) for this!

Hayling's History Intrigues St Mary's Parishioners

Archaeology is like detective work, says Grahame Soffe. It involves a search for clues and lost evidence. He is a member of the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England and he was speaking at a seminar on Hayling's history, at St Mary's Church, Hayling, on the 8 September. He first became interested in Hayling in the mid-1970s, when excavating the Iron Age and Roman temples site in North Hayling. He was asked by the Vicar of the day, Revd Nigel O'Connor, to write a guidebook of St Mary's. He discovered the church is not like any other medieval church building and the project proved to be much bigger than he expected, taking him several years to complete. The temple too was unique, much bigger than any other temple of that era in Britain and its architecture was very strange. They learned that it was originally an Iron Age temple built by the pre-Roman 'ancient Britons'. But when the Romans arrived they transformed it into a Gallo/Roman temple, which seemed to have 'slipped across the Channel'. There were similar temples in France in the Dordogne and especially one in Perigueux but none like it in Britain. Incidentally, the Christian church in South Hayling and the pagan temple in North Hayling have one thing in common – they are built on the highest points of the Island.

Grahame reminded the audience that one thing to remember when studying ancient buildings is that they are often altered with redesigns and extensions over the centuries. In many cases there would be changes during the period of one lifetime though some common features didn't change much, such as the Romanesque arches found typically in Roman, Saxon and some Norman buildings.

Hayling's temple seems to have been built about AD 60-65, on the site of an Iron Age temple and was renovated about AD 200. In the late 4th century devotees were still making offerings to Roman and Celtic gods on the site. This was about the time that Christianity first began to take hold in Britain and the earliest evidence of Christianity on Hayling seems to have been a piece of masonry now used as a font in St Mary's. This has Saxon carvings of tendrils, birds and flowers. In Saxon times it was probably not a font, because their babies were baptized in an open bath. He believes that it was originally

the base of a Saxon cross, dated about the 9th century, of a type which were often erected outside Saxon churches.

Grahame believes that the existing St Mary's building, built just over 750 years ago, was preceded by a Saxon church, probably built in timber. Later it might have been rebuilt in stone with a square tower, very tall in relation to the width, with very small windows because of the cost of glass in those days. Since stone is difficult to obtain in this district, the Saxons probably robbed Roman buildings on the Island, and he believes that some of the sarsen stones originally used for foundations of the Roman temple may have been used in St Mary's foundations. They certainly were in St Peter's, Northney. Saxon churches were relatively small with box-like naves and small chancels. They were so small that there were eight such parish churches in Winchester. He believes that what happened on Hayling was intimately associated with events in Winchester which had a royal palace, cathedral, priory and Minster in Saxon times and was the richest diocese in western Europe in the 15th century. The manor of south Hayling was given to Queen Emma as part of her dowry when she married King Ethelred the Unready in Winchester. After surviving trial by ordeal for allegedly infamous behaviour she gave it to the monks of St Swithin's in Winchester.

As for the location of Hayling's early Saxon church, Grahame pointed out that Hayling was not an island until the late Iron Age. When the sea gradually rose it came right up to the church at Portchester and washed away the original church at St Helens in the Isle of Wight. So the first Hayling church might have been flooded, as some records state. But he queried whether Alexander McKee discovered foundations of a church on Church Rocks, a few miles south of the funfair, as was claimed. He thinks an original church may have been named All Saints. Other local historians point out that there may have been a church at Eastoke, which was a separate manor originally belonging to the monks of Troarn Abbey, also in France. That church may have been flooded and this would explain the ancient reports of a lost church on a site now out in Hayling Bay. Emsworth revisionist historian, John Reger, believes that claims a church and land was flooded grew up from an attempt by a Hayling prior to dodge taxes.

After the battle of Hastings William the Conqueror gave the manor of South Hayling to the monks of Jumieges. They took over completely in the 13th century and they built the existing church. This might explain why an earlier church on the site had to be replaced by a larger one. Grahame concluded his talk by saying there are other mysteries such as the unique stone carvings, who financed the building and in particular why the chancel is so large, big enough for the choir stalls as well as the altar. After the meeting it was revealed that some Islanders are investigating the possibility that these mysteries could be explained by the presence here of Knights Templar, fleeing from persecution in France. They were fabulously wealthy and they might have found Hayling an ideal hiding place from their enemy, King Philip IV of France. A video on this subject made by local historians is soon to be shown.

Her Serene Highness Kept her Dignity to the End

Her Serene Highness Princess Catherine Yourievsky (HSH for short) must have been a very brave woman. When a tree fell on her house, 240 Havant Road, Islanders said she behaved as if nothing had happened. Her original home on Hayling was The Haven in Sinah Lane which she bought in 1932 for £1,150. She sold it in 1936 for £1,500 and bought a pair of almshouses which she combined to be 240 Havant Road and named Naini, Indian for princess. These were model properties intended to be the start of a development by a Mr Fletcher which didn't proceed. She originally may have had servants such as a Lily Pickens once her two sons' governess and an English coachman, Albert Stanard. There was talk of wild parties and a weekly wine order with Preston Watson of Havant, (now Waitrose.) She was treated sympathetically by Islanders such as her next door neighbour in Havant Road, a Mr Hodge, once a café proprietor who became her 'unpaid servant'. She was an active member of the Women's Institute, such as joining them in making hats. One local girl used to bring her flowers and described how she would usually find her dozing, always accompanied by a pet dog.

HSH was born in the Winter Palace, St Petersburg, to Czar Alexander II's second wife, Princess Catherine Dolgoruki whose ancestors included the wife of Czar Michael, the first Romanoff. But Alexander II was assassinated when

HSH was aged about three. This meant her mother had to yield her position to the Czar's oldest child by his first wife, who became Czar Alexander III. Catherine went to live at homes in Biarritz, Paris and Nice but her family kept their titles Serene Highness and the historic name Yourievsky to maintain their status. Czar Alexander II passionately loved HSH's mother though he was eighteen years older than her. They first met when she was a child, but a relationship formed when he met her at the Smolny Institute, next door to the Winter Palace, a school for aristocratic young ladies. They had a lightning affair. He danced the mazurka with her at a palace function, then they met in the gardens firstly on a park bench watched by the secret service. Eventually he took her to live in his palace apartment until his first wife died and their relationship became open. He was killed just before he was to make her officially his Czarina, despite being admired as 'The Liberator' for freeing the Russian serfs. Hayling's Princess was their fourth child.

HSH first married the sugar millionaire Prince Bariatinski, grandson of the general who conquered the Caucasus for Russia. They lived in a vast estate at Kursk, the scene of a prodigious tank battle between Russians and Germans in the Second World War. They also had a palace at Yalta and properties in Italy. They had two sons before he died tragically young. She went to Paris to stay with her mother and socialised with top people, including Britain's King Edward VII. She played golf, accompanied always by her dog which must have upset other golfers. (In France her mother had a special cemetery reserved for all her pet dogs over years.) Back in Yalta when the First World War broke out HSH was raising money for the war effort when she met her second husband, a young officer, Serge Obolenski (distantly related to the famed English international rugby player of the same name.) Serge was convalescing from mild shell shock, a charming, brilliant man who, it was said, *could sell umbrellas in the Sahara*. When the Communist revolution came he left to join a Tartar army fighting with the White Russian forces. This infuriated the Reds. They occupied her palace in Yalta and got drunk on the contents of the cellar. Because she was a Romanoff and her husband was fighting against the revolution they decided to put her up against a wall and shoot her. While her servants gathered to witness the execution a sailor, who may have been bribed, helped her to run away. She escaped to one friend's

house, then another, changing into peasant clothes, ending up in the cottage of her gardener where she scrubbed the floors, helped with the cooking and looked after the cow. Typically she was thrilled when someone rescued her pet dog as well.

She was determined to reunite with her husband who she heard had left for Moscow so she took a train for a five-day journey sitting on the luggage rack. Carriages were packed with armed revolutionaries amongst whom she recognised some of the men who had wanted to shoot her.

She was reunited with her husband who constantly praised her cool and strength in those difficult times. Then a twist of fate enabled them to escape Russia. The Communist leader Lenin had sought peace with Germany and decreed that the Russian soldiers could go home. This left the Germans with a free hand over the frontier so Catherine and Obolenski were allowed to cross Austria and Switzerland to reach her mother's home in France. From there they came to London where Serge had a number of friends, as he had studied at Oxford. One of these was Prince Yousopoff who described to them how he had poisoned, shot then drowned the notorious priest and womaniser Rasputin.

Cut off from her finances in Russia, HSH decided to raise money with her impressive contralto voice, helped by Sir Thomas Beecham and Dame Madame Melba, singing in London halls and even Brighton pier. Husband Obolenski took various business posts. In 1922 HSH's mother died and the same year Obolenski divorced her in favour of Alice Astor of the renowned hotel business, though this did not last long. Alone and gradually getting poorer HSH lived quietly plagued by asthma choosing to live on Hayling for that reason. It is believed she had a small allowance from the Queen Mother of those days, a secret which obviously had to be kept from Russia's leader, Stalin. Unfortunately she entrusted her parents' private papers detailing the intimacies of their relations to someone who leaked them to a novelist and they were used in a feature film. But during the second world war the biggest surprise was when Obolenski turned up to see her on Hayling. He had become General Eisenhower's Russian adviser at Southwick House, preparing for the D-Day invasion. He had helped to organize their Office of

Strategic Services, America's SAS. In 1943 aged fifty-one he parachuted into Sardinia with the grandson of US President Theodore Roosevelt, accepting the surrender of over 200,000 Italian troops, a feat made possible because their government had capitulated to the allies.

Catherine struggled on in Hayling, increasingly short of money but always maintaining her dignity. *She would freeze if she felt someone became too familiar* said Nelly Wallis, her hairdresser. *The saddest day was when she couldn't afford a taxi to the salon on the sea front and came by bus.* She died in a nursing home in Emsworth, in 1959 aged about seventy-nine and is buried near the north door of St Peter's Church, Hayling.

Was this Hayling's own *Mary Rose* Horror, Two Thousand Years Ago?

A mass grave on Hayling is never likely to yield its secrets. The discovery was made some time ago by members of the Chichester Archaeological Society and announced at a meeting in the Chichester Assembly Rooms. The macabre discovery was of forty bodies, all young men, none of whom showed any signs of physical injury. Also strange was the fact that there were no other artefacts in the grave, presumably the bodies were stripped of their clothes and property for some reason. A report of the meeting was made for the *Hayling Islander* at the time but it was decided not to publish it: there were the natural sensitivities about such a find on property which may have been near homes or on valuable land. Other fears were that metal detectorists might infringe the private property rights of owners. (A few years ago a very rare reliquary type object found on Hayling featuring Roman gods was put up for sale at car boot type sale in Glastonbury without reference to whoever was the owner.) But at the same time it had to be admitted that management of such a site would be expensive and would present problems. For a start the grave could not be configured with Hayling's image as a holiday Island. The logo; 'Come and see our mass grave', would not do much for our image!

Various reasonable conclusions have been made about the find though nothing can be confirmed. Firstly it is presumed they date from Roman times since there are considerable pre-Roman and Roman remains here, but not

much archaeologically e.g. from Saxon times. A forensic type check would be very useful, easily establishing exactly when they died and provide information about their lives e.g. where they came from and what their life experience had been. No such investigation has been made. Were the deaths due to an epidemic? If so why were they only young men? An explanation might be that the skeletons were of soldiers or naval personnel. Did they die as a result of a disaster, such as a sinking just offshore during a storm? Was it a Hayling version of the sinking of the Mary Rose: an overloaded warship making a hasty manoeuvre during a battle? The fact that no weapons were found suggests that the officers didn't want weapons lying around which an enemy could have found and used. Or is it possible that the young men were recently joined recruits who still hadn't been issued with weapons because they were untrained. Another explanation may have been they were prisoners of war on their way to being sold as slaves, hence they had no possessions, especially weapons.

Most persuasive is the suggestion that they were galley slaves. Oar assisted warships were associated with the relatively sheltered waters of the Mediterranean with its minimal tide range. Their value in battle was especially the ability to ram opposing vessels. In waters like ours this could become ridiculously difficult even in normal conditions with varying tide flows and near-shore currents. Roman sea captains were notoriously useless at handling tides with no tide tables around, of course. So the fate of the poor men might have simply been that they were chained to their benches when their ship turned turtle, perhaps accidentally, all their deaths being instantaneous. They'd have no luggage of course, hence no artefacts.

The most obvious time when a fleet of ships might have been around near Hayling in ancient times would have been during the invasion by the Roman army in AD 46 led by the brilliant commander Vespasian, later to become one of Rome's most formidable Emperors who seized power from the insane Nero. Vespasian came here leading the southern wing of the Roman invasion under Emperor Claudius who himself attacked the shore of Essex using their strategic weapon of those days – armoured elephants. The fact that the Hayling bodies were unarmed could also be explained by the fact that Vespasian's invasion was intended to be an unopposed attack because the

Ancient Britons of Hayling in those days belonged to the Atrebates tribe. For about a century they were allied to the Romans, sharing a fear and hatred of the Druids. There was also, locally, a hope that if the Romans took us over we would benefit from a huge increase in trade with Europe under the aegis of the Pax Romana – the Roman peace. In other words a Common Market two thousand years before today's not too successful one.

There was another reason why Hayling should have become the focus of an influx of Roman warriors. About fifteen years after the Romans arrived they faced a very strong opponent – the warrior queen Boadicea. She was furious at being deposed as queen and the Romans' cruel treatment of her daughters. She raised an army to punish them, attracting support from half of the Britons. Finding their lines of communication stretched from London to Anglesey in North Wales she hit back savagely at the Roman Ninth Legion slaying about seventy thousand Romans and supporters and wiping out their existing footholds in places like St Albans and Colchester, even reaching London. The Romans panicked and sent for reinforcements. Could the men in the mass grave had been part of hastily gathered reinforcements but still untrained, hence their lack of weapons? Incidentally archaeologists report that at the Roman Temple in Hayling there is a shrine to a high up Roman officer.

Another occasion when young soldiers (or Prisoners of War) may have converged on Hayling in Roman times was during the revolt by the dissident Marcus Aurelius Carausius. Under the Romans he was responsible for defending Britain's 'Saxon shore' – the part of the coast under attack by marauding bands of Saxons. Central government from Rome was weak and Carausius, who had risen from the ranks, realised that he could personally seize control of Roman Britain. (AD 286-293.) After much disruption Carausius was murdered by his guards and the Romans resumed control.

We sometimes get reports of human bones discovered in Langstone Harbour beside the Hayling Billy Leisure Trail. This was once the location of paupers' graves and possibly where victims of the Black Death and Plague would be disposed of. During the Black Death even the Vicar of Hayling became a victim. Musket balls found on property off Copse Lane suggest a skirmish

occurred there between Royalists from Warblington Castle and Parliamentarians from Portsmouth during the Civil War (1640s).

Hayling Mass Grave Keeps its Secrets

The discovery in Dorset of the mass grave of '54 well-built young men' has excited local historians. Investigations showed they had died in the tenth century and were of Viking stock. The men had been decapitated and are thought to have been prisoners savaged by vengeful Saxons fed up with raids from the sea. It is suggested the Vikings were part of a concerted raid on the south coast of England, killing and plundering, presumably giving Hayling the once over on their way. It comes also as a reminder that the south coast of England was also at the mercy of Barbary slavers. It is estimated that as late as the seventeenth century tens of thousands of slaves, many captured from western Europe, were kept in Algeria alone, some may have come from Hayling. Islanders were defenceless with only Tournerbury fort to escape to in an emergency of this sort.

But a little known secret is that Hayling Island has a mass grave of its own. The skeletons of up to forty young men were discovered here by archaeologists in the 1970s but only announced many years later at a meeting of the Chichester Archaeological Society. The news may not have been made public in case it was sensationalised, leading to damage of private property by metal detectorists. Unlike the Dorset men, the bodies on Hayling showed no physical injuries, proving they had not died fighting. But the bones did show signs of being fly-blown, suggesting they had lain in the open for quite a long time before they were buried. There didn't appear to be any sign of memorial or mourning for the poor chaps so it is unlikely they were actually Hayling Islanders leaving loved ones in this locality.

Professor David Score, commenting on the Dorset find, said rare discoveries of this kind *present an incredible opportunity* to learn about the past. So what can we deduce about Hayling's past from these bones? For a start, how could so many young men have died at the same time with no indications of violence? One answer may be that there was a deadly epidemic. If so where are the other victims, including women and children? A more likely scenario

may be that about two thousand years ago, in Roman times or the Iron Age, there was a disaster like the Mary Rose a thousand years later, in which a heavily laden naval vessel had suddenly keeled over and sunk, taking all on board to their deaths. This theory fits the facts nicely. With over forty men on board a Hayling wreck there were far more than a typical vessel of that period needed for a crew, even if it was a Roman naval vessel with galley slaves as oarsmen. But, as with the Mary Rose, extra men on board could have been soldiers on their way to a war zone.

At the meeting in Chichester, Professor King said he believed the Hayling temple had military associations in Roman times. He pointed out the fact that the most prominent shrine found there was an altar stone dedicated to the 9th Hispanic Legion. It was inscribed with the name Naevianus. The 9th Hispanic Legion, were the 'oldest and most feared of the Roman units'. They were already established at the time of Julius Caesar and were part of the Roman invasion force that came to Britain in AD 43. Led by Vespasian, the brilliant Roman soldier later to be Emperor, they landed near Hayling and went west to conquer the Isle of Wight and Dorset as far as Maiden Castle. But they suffered in about AD 60, losing a third of their men in the fighting against the British rebel Queen Boadicea. One theory is that the Romans hastily made up for these crippling losses with 'auxiliaries', manpower from Spain sent via Hayling to support the fighting men. Possibly a draft of these raw recruits were on board a vessel that sank in a storm, leaving their bodies scattered on our beaches and creeks for weeks before they were buried on Hayling, incognito. The exception may have been Naevianus, presumably a respected veteran and senior officer in charge of the draft, who was given the special honour of a shrine in the Hayling temple. How about someone going down to the shore one night, say on All Souls Day, and call out the name Naevianus. You never know, his 'shade' might like to meet you.

There are many Roman archaeological sites in this district. The most recent discovery is an 'amansio', a Roman 'Travel Lodge', for officials overseeing the province. This has been discovered in Warblington, and is due to be excavated.

Now it Can be Told Top Secret at the Gun Site

The COPPS (Combined Operations units) now commemorated on Hayling Seafront, were not the Island's only contribution to success on D-Day. The late Fred Ryder, who was for some time Battery Quartermaster Sergeant at the Gun Site (opposite Sinah Warren) used to tell an amusing but revealing story of those times. One day a panicky young officer appeared at the Gun Site office, now a residence in Sinah Lane, demanding to borrow the unit's Matador lorry. These were standard army vehicles for transporting men and materials. The Matador was similar in size to the Champion ('Champ') but had the advantage of a tow bar at the rear making it ideal for towing, in their case the Gun Site's 3.7 inch anti-aircraft guns, which were mounted on wheels.

The officers' request was turned down at once, seen as a 'damned cheek'. No unit worth its while would have risked lending such useful equipment to any one without special permission from higher up. What made it worse was that the officer wouldn't say what he wanted to use the Matador for, only saying it was 'Top Secret'. Eventually after a lot of phone calls and arguments permission was given for a few hours only. Fearfully the Hayling Gunners watched their Matador disappear towards the Ferry. A few hours later it was returned.

Unfortunately a few days later the officer reappeared, still panicky, asking for it to be loaned again. He still would not let them know what for. This time the Gunners were prepared. They detailed a discrete observation group to slip down to the Ferry to see what was going on. What they saw explained everything. Half way across Langstone Harbour mouth a tank was stuck in the mud. Once again ropes and chains were slung from the Matador and the tank restored to dry land, though a somewhat undignified recovery it had to be said.

It is quite likely that this indeed was a top secret effort to get amphibious tanks able to support the infantry on the D-Day landings. Probably the trials were the brain child of one of Hayling's residents of those days, author and

aeroplane manufacturer Nevil Shute (Norway.) He had come to live at Pond Head when his home in Southsea became vulnerable to bombing. Whilst here he conducted secret projects on the shore line of Pond Head and elsewhere on Hayling the experiments at the mouth of Langstone Harbour being the most important. Though the ones needing to be cleared up by the Matadors were failures others did succeed and British troops did get tank support on D-Day using floatation buoyancy of one sort or another. In this they were luckier than their American allies who had no tank support e.g. at their landings on Omaha beach which suffered heavy casualties.

Fred Ryder described how he came to the Hayling Gun Site with an advance party of Gunners about Christmas 1941. They found the site still deserted and damaged after a heavy attack by parachute bombs which drifted onto Hayling from seawards on 17/18th April of that year. Six men were killed and their names are honoured at one of the gun pits today. One of these bombs dangled for hours from a tree at the junction of Sinah Lane and Park Road, forcing West Town residents to divert to Beachlands if they wanted to get to Mengham.

On his first night at the site Fred described exploring the area walking along the dark and deserted road when suddenly there was an enormous bang. No bombs this time. It was caused by a relief valve in the sewage system of those days. For Islanders a bigger threat came down the road at the junction of Staunton Avenue and the Sea Front. A clutch of incendiary bombs released by the Luftwaffe intended to scatter on their way down, actually failed to be released and there was a huge conflagration where today there is nothing but peace, calm and blackberry bushes.

Later on Fred's biggest surprise came when he happened to be taking a shower at the office HQ. To his alarm he heard the voices of young ladies downstairs. He struggled to make himself presentable and found they were the first draught of ATS to man the unit. They soon came to play their part in the war effort, using apparatus for range and direction finding to guide the guns. It was stoutly denied they ever fired any of the guns. One ATS girl is believed to have been killed. A mystery from those days was that when one of the defensive pill boxes was cleared up after the war clothes and other

personal items revealed that someone had been living there incognito. Actually one family did take to a pill box near Sinah during night time raids and at least one Islander was born there. When Fred's unit left Hayling they joined the Eighth Army in the Mediterranean.

D-Day on Hayling

Leading Wren, Sheila Troke, née, Lauchlan, spent the night before D-Day 1944 on duty in her office on the south-east corner of the first floor of the Royal Hotel, on Hayling sea front. She was a Signals Distribution Wren but a period of silence had been ordered. This meant no wireless messages, no outside phone messages, no morse or flash signals. So she had nothing to do all night. There was a noise outside so she turned the lights off, took the blackout down and looked out. What she saw was history being made in the sea off Hayling. One window faced east over the funfair, but the main window looked south across Beachlands towards the sea. She saw hundreds of boats passing Hayling on the way to the invasion beaches of Normandy. *I've never seen anything like it before or since*, says Sheila. But her main impression was the noise of all the engines. *It was tremendous!* says Sheila. There was a phone line to the 'Wrennery' in the Victoria Hotel, on the corner of Beach Road and Westfield Avenue, now the site of part of Mark Anthony Court. Her friend Peggy was taking time off there and Sheila reported what she could see. Most of the young men they had mixed with on Hayling were on those boats and had gone. Few came back. The next day Hayling seemed deserted. It was quite eerie. So Sheila and Peggy spent the day playing tennis in the garden of 2 Staunton Avenue.

For months Sheila had been working at HMS *Dragonfly*, established at the Royal in June 1943. It was a Combined Operations 'Suspense Base', for holding and training servicemen preparing for the invasion. Further down the seafront Suntrap School, now converted into luxury apartments, was their medical centre and dental surgery. Sheila specially remembers the kindness of a Voluntary Aid Detachment Nurse who attended the sick bay there. After the war she became an air hostess but was killed in a crash. Next door to the Royal Hotel, the Norfolk Crescent was packed with tough

Canadian troops, who were 'very wild' and wrecked the place. Says Sheila: *The whole Island was packed with so many thousands of soldiers you'd think it would sink!*

Dragonfly looked after the invasion barges moored round the coast, especially in Langstone harbour. They weren't the very large craft such as landed troops for the assault but smaller vessels which ferried men and equipment to and from bigger ships out to sea. They were big enough to carry maybe two tanks or cars plus about a dozen men. In Langstone harbour they had practised going backwards and forwards, again and again, to get the manoeuvres correct. The skippers of these boats were very young and inexperienced. Sheila remembers how one Midshipman, aged only about seventeen, took out a landing craft with the ramp still down. It sank at once and had to be recovered at low tide.

In those days Sheila was an eighteen-year old Wren, as the Woman's Royal Naval Service was known. She was one of eight STOs, switchboard officers, and eight SDOs, signal distribution officers. The main switchboard was in a concrete bunker in the garden of a house named Brooklyn, on the south corner of Bacon Lane and Beach Road. They were guarded by a steel-helmeted sentry with rifle and bayonet at the ready. They worked shifts of eight hours on, twelve off, on a three or four day rota. At nights they worked from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. and got 36 hours off, unless one of the other girls reported sick and someone had to stand in for her. The bunker was dismantled in 1945 and there are no signs of it today.

When off duty they slept eight to a room in a house in Bacon Lane, named Goldersley. There were only two other houses in Bacon Lane in those days. They were catered for in the 'Wrennery'. Security everywhere was very tight. One evening she was walking on the beach with new, squeaky shoes and she was told if she couldn't be quiet she would have to walk in the sea to stop the noise. She remembers being frightened when they were stopped by a sentry who pointed a rifle and bayonet at their chests. He ordered them to approach one by one to show their passes. Security was especially tight towards Eastoke and no one was permitted on Sandy Point. The COPPs (Combined Operations Pilotage Pioneers) were stationed at the Sailing Club. At night

they used to see their 'fast, little motor boats' speeding across the Channel to survey the beaches for the D-Day landings.

Sheila is positive that Churchill and Eisenhower visited Hayling beach at least once, probably twice, but she can't remember anything about General Montgomery being there. Despite stories to the contrary, she says that none of these wartime leaders actually visited the Royal Hotel or stood on the balcony to watch the practice landings as is said. But 'Winnie' and 'Ike' did walk quite a way along the sand towards the sand dunes at Gunner Point, studying the terrain carefully, because Hayling beach was similar to the beaches planned for the D-Day landings. Exactly a month before D-Day they watched the practise landings known as Operation Fabius. The troops selected for the first wave of the assault on 6 June were taken round the Isle of Wight from Gosport and practised landing on Hayling Beachlands. Nobody was actually allowed to watch them and Islanders were told to keep their curtains drawn

Sheila's friend, Peggy, had a boyfriend, Gerry Cole, who was Company Sergeant Major of the Royal Marines. He was a very smart man, six foot four inches tall with beautifully polished boots. He went with the invasion fleet on D-Day. When he came back he was literally on his knees with fatigue and shock. He said the noise alone of the guns and bombs on the invasion beaches was *absolutely shattering*. Sheila said: *We had to carry him to bed*.

Sheila was full of praise for the Ack-Ack (anti-aircraft) Gunners at Sinah gun site. *They were crack shots and hit many enemy planes*. Sheila's fiancé, Alick Troke, was a Sick Bay Chief Petty Officer whose post was in a bungalow named Rinkaby, on the north corner of Staunton Avenue and St Helen's Road. The doctor's surgery was on the left of the front door and Alick's clinic and dispensary were on the right side. One day a stray land mine, probably jettisoned by a fleeing enemy bomber, fell somewhere between the bungalow and Station Road, causing huge damage. The wall of the dispensary was wrecked and all his bottles of medicines and pills were smashed and thrown around. He swept them up with the rest of the debris and threw them all away. *What else can I do?* he said.

One of his jobs was to distribute the First Aid boxes to the invasion barges before they left. They each included a small bottle of medicinal brandy but these had a habit of disappearing. So he took them out and when he delivered the boxes to the skippers of the barges he handed them the brandy separately. He said: *What harm could they do? They were small bottles and most of the skippers were very young.*

Hayling in those days was quite different to now, says Sheila. It was really just country with two or three villages. Beach Road has changed beyond recognition. It used to be all houses with really beautiful gardens. For entertainment they used to have camp dances, concerts and 'sixpenny hop' dances. Occasionally professional entertainers came down in the official company known as ENSA. One famous personality was a singer, Anne Shelton. But the officers 'pinched' her and entertained her in the ward room. The Wrens used to go often to the Regal Cinema in Mengham. But it was full of fleas and they had a job to get rid of them for days afterwards. Their favourite pubs were the Royal Shades and the West Town Hotel. Sometimes in the evening they would stroll down Hollow Lane to the Mengham fish and chip shop, but it was usually only for chips or potato cakes, fish was rare.

Dragonfly shut down on 15 January 1946. Sheila married Alick and they stayed on Hayling for some time after the war. For a while they lived in the basement of a hotel, which was then situated at the east end of the Crescent. It was considered a very good address with its fabulous views. Then she lived down the Ferry Road before moving to Malta, then returning to England and a house in Cowplain. Alick always wanted to return to living on Hayling but sadly he passed away.

Sheila served as a Liberal Democrat Councillor on Havant Borough Council, representing Hart Plain Ward.

The Hayling Bridge and Causeway also known as the Langstone Bridge

Will our road system cope with more houses and cars in the future? What does history tell us?

If you had been looking out to Langstone from Northney in February 1825 you would have seen a steam tug pulling two barges east towards Thorney. On board each was an escort of four 'redcoats' armed with muskets and they were carrying a total of 75 tons of gold bullion, possibly worth in today's values one billion pounds. They were the first to use a new canal from Portsmouth Harbour via Chichester, Arun and Godalming, eventually docking (in two days, sixteen hours) close to the Bank of England in the City of London.

The canal was the brainchild of William Huskisson, the Minister of Works and MP for Chichester. It was his answer to the same economic problems we have today: unemployment and the need for more lending by the banks. Unfortunately the canal never achieved its early promise being supplanted by the railways in the 1840s. Poor Huskisson himself became the first person to be killed in a railway accident whilst taking a comfort break beside the carriages of a train near Liverpool. The full story of the canal can be found in PAL Vine's book *'London's Lost Route to Portsmouth'* (Phillimore).

But Hayling Islanders did not see the canal as a good thing at all. It meant digging a channel across the two thousand year old wadeway from Langstone to Hayling. Originally this was intended for pilgrims on their way to Northney's Roman temple where they sought rites and potions, some say early Christian worship. After the Romans the spin off was for farmers who could graze their herds on the Island and fishermen, of course. All this came to an end when the wadeway was cut through. So a consortium of 48 shareholders, led by the Earl of Surrey, set up a £12,000 project to pass an Act of Parliament for *'A causeway, good and substantial bridge, proper and commodious roads approaches or avenues thereto AND PROVISION FOR AN EMERGENCY BRIDGE OR FERRY IN CASE OF ACCIDENT'*.

The most enthusiastic person behind this project was the new Lord of the Manor of Hayling, William Padwick. He had ideas of Hayling becoming a thrilling new holiday resort to rival Brighton and Bognor, and an entrepôt attracting half the overseas trade of the London docks with a thousand acre commercial development. Some hopes!

In 1825 the bridge was built of cheap but durable African timber. There was much slapping on of tolls, such as (modern money) halfpenny per person (including wheel barrow) the same for a cow and penny per horse. Sedan chairs cost 5 pence (2p), the rich came in four-horse carriages (the toll a whopping one shilling and three pence old money (6p)). Other coaches rejoiced in names such as berlins, landaus, chariots and calashes. A hearse, with or without a body, cost 12 pence (5p), a flock of twenty sheep or pigs got a cut price, also 12 pence (5p). A load of dung cost penny ha'penny a ton. Exemptions included people going to church, soldiers marching on duty, electors on the way to the hustings, Royal Mail and members of the Royal Household. The farrier on the corner, now the site of a filling station, was expected to leave his shutters open so the furnace provided light at night. Anyone crossing other than by the bridge (within a thousand yards in either direction) risked a colossal £5 fine.

Unpromisingly, the opening of the bridge saw a tremendous traffic jam. People flocked to see what was for most their first sight of the beauty of central and south Hayling. The unspoilt countryside was likened to 'a bride clothed only in her blushes'. Wow! There was so much to see that many couldn't make it in time to see the beach before nightfall.

In 1956 the timber bridge was replaced by one of reinforced concrete roughly along the same line but still no relief bridge or even a relief third lane. In the terms of the Act of Parliament the bridge was illegal and still is today. This didn't worry most people because in 1867 we got the famous Hayling Billy steam train which would connect you to Portsmouth, say leaving about eight allowed time for two hours shopping in Arundel Street and be back on the Island for lunch. Trains to London (Waterloo and Victoria) were another option.

But fifty years since the Hayling Billy was axed there are still no relief lanes or bridge, no 'proper and commodious roads' only the original two lanes. So all traffic, including heavy and wide loads, lumbers along. Pedestrian crossing, e.g. at Stoke is almost impossible for hours. Surely new houses and more cars will not be 'sustainable' as new planning rules now demand.

I am grateful to Kat Wooton for showing me a copy of the Act of Parliament setting up the Langstone Bridge Company.

Langstone Bridge History

Kat Wooton has the future of Hayling in her hands – as it was in May 1823 – for she holds a copy of the Act of Parliament setting up the Langstone Bridge Company. It was printed for the Lord of the Manor, William Padwick, and was found recently by a Terry Strutt when clearing out a workshop and yard in Thames Ditton. That property was once used by a builder named Macy who is believed to have worked on Hayling. The Act provided for a causeway, 'good and substantial' bridge, 'proper and commodious Roads, Approaches or Avenues thereto' and provision for an emergency bridge or ferry in the event of an accident.

It begins with the preamble that:

... for the space of Twelve Hours out of every Twenty-four there is no direct Communication between the Mainland and Hayling Island. This is owing to the Passage commonly known by the Name of The Wadeway which runs in a very uneven unequal and circuitous manner being overflowed by the Sea. Because of the violence of the Winds and Sea the Wadeway is frequently covered by the Tide the whole Twenty-four hours and boats are often totally prevented from crossing the said Harbour. Communication becomes impracticable, and great Inconvenience, Difficulty and Loss are thereby occasioned, and the Lives of His Majesty's subjects are very much endangered.

The Act names 48 shareholders in this £12,000 project led by the Earl of Surrrey and including well known Hayling surnames such as Rogers, Bulbeck, Bone, Crasweller, Padwick and King. There was also an eleven-man

committee of management led by Sir George Staunton who was Lord of the Manor of Havant. It set up a jury to decide disputes about the valuation of land to be purchased and authorises tolls. These ranged from one penny per person including a wheelbarrow, penny a cow, two pence (1p) a horse. A flock of over twenty sheep or pigs got a cut rate of 'Ten Pence (4p) per Score'. A Sedan chair cost one shilling (5p) but what about the walkers who had to carry it?). A hearse with or without a body cost two shillings and sixpence (12½p). For a cart drawn by four horses the toll was one shilling and three pence (6p). On top of this were charges for the load. Dung and ashes cost three pence (1p) a ton, individual parcels less than 56 pounds cost 6 pence (2½ p).

Persons attending the Monarch or any member of the Royal family were exempted as were the Postmaster General's mails, Soldiers and Volunteers upon their March or Duty, prisoners on legal warrant, travellers going to their usual places of religious Worship on Sunday and any Horse or Beast drawing any Coach, Berlin, Landau, Chariot, Calash, Chair or other Carriage or any Passenger on horseback going to any Election for Knights to serve in Parliament. Wagons "in the Service of His Majesty's Forces" could not be stopped for being overweight. A fine of up to £5 was imposed on anyone crossing Langstone harbour by any other means within a thousand yards of the bridge in either direction. Squibs, rockets, serpents or other fireworks, bull baiting, football, tennis, fives and cricket were banned as were any Hawker, Higgler and Gipse. Any nearby blacksmiths were expected to keep their shutters open after twilight to light the bridge.

The causeway and bridge were to run from a Close of Land called Langstone Lane Field and a certain Close of Pasture land called Salt Piece, of the estate of the late Thomas Bayly Silver, near the Stonehouses of John Smith Lane. Negotiations were conducted by the Trustees. On the Hayling side the bridge started at or near The Ferry House in the parish of Hayling North. This must have been opposite today's Texaco petrol station.

The Act envisaged setting up Docks, Wharfs, Quays and Landing places, Weighbeams and Cranes but it was strictly laid down that the bridge should not interfere with the Arundel to Portsmouth canal, which it crossed over. In

fact North Hayling remained a quiet backwater and the investment in Avenues went to property development in South Hayling where the Crescent was built in 1837. The population of Hayling and Langstone in those days was only in the hundreds and up till then practically everyone must have had some involvement in smuggling. So the prospect of honest employment brought by the bridge must have been a relief, especially since a new, tough Coastguard service was cracking down on the 'Gentlemen'.

Obviously the company never dreamed of the thousands of 'horseless carriages' using the new bridge built in the 1950s so why was the bridge of 1823 actually wider than the one today? Most Islanders would question whether the road across today's Langstone Bridge is 'proper and commodious' and whatever happened to the 'proper Approaches or Avenues' to the bridge? All we've got is the Havant and Northney Roads!

Cary Grant not such a Star?

Two books published last year in the US have answered questions which have interested Hayling Islander Molly Sims for many years. They are about the 'Hollywood Great' film star Cary Grant. The first is *Dear Cary* by Dyan Cannon his fourth wife, the second is *Good Stuff* by Jennifer Grant, their daughter, Cary Grant's only child. Molly was once Cary Grant's housekeeper at 9966 Beverley Grove Drive, California 90210, a house originally built by Howard Hughes.

Molly (who will be 99 next March) was staying at her daughter's in Los Angeles when she saw an advertisement for a housekeeper, who must be able to do English cooking. She felt she had nothing to lose by applying but was very surprised when at the interview the departing housekeeper said the employer was Cary Grant. When she went to the house to start work she found Cary Grant was away. This gave the opportunity to explore the house for herself. Most surprising was one room obviously furnished as a little girl's bedroom with a number of wrapped Christmas presents. It turned out to be his daughter Jennifer's room, and she hadn't turned up for her Christmas visit because of illness. In due course Jennifer did stay on visits and Molly remembers seeing Cary Grant standing at a window watching her leave with tears running down his face. How had a relationship with so much love end so sadly?

Jennifer's mother was Dyan Cannon, one of the many young actresses in Hollywood, looking for fame and fortune. She'd had a small part in one film but was actually in Rome leading the "dolce vita" life when she heard that Cary Grant had noticed the film and wanted to meet her – audition for a bigger part being on the cards. In fact when she came back to Los Angeles Cary's interest was purely social – he wanted her company. She was disappointed and kept him at a distance becoming busy with stage parts. On one occasion he persuaded her to follow his Rolls to his home for drinks, but when there was a traffic hold up she turned her car and drove away. There were reasons for the unsuitability of the relationship, notably that Cary was thirty-three years older than she was, three years older than her father. However friendship did develop and she was soon mixing in his circles, with stars such as Sophia Loren, Frank Sinatra, Danny Kay, Doris Day, Alfred Hitchcock and personalities such as Howard Hughes, Ari Gulbenkian and Maria Callas.

The trouble was that Cary had three failed marriages and as he put it "three strikes and he was out." On her part Dyan was determined never to give herself away until she married. However, one day Cary did say the magic words and they were engaged, without a ring it must be said. After that things started to change. He became more difficult to please becoming fussy about her clothes and behaviour. Even just before the marriage ceremony he was furious at the colour she had varnished her nails. The wedding ring caused her finger to swell and it had to be broken off by a plumber. He became increasingly controlling, even down to watching how she opened and shut doors (her grip had to be not too tight, not too slack) or turned taps on and off. She also learned that he was taking LSD under medical supervision because of bouts of depression. He believed the hallucinations made him closer to God and he thought it would strengthen their relationship if she joined him, though her first experiment made her very ill. After the birth of baby Jennifer, things got worse. When she got home from hospital she found that he had given away her much loved pet of ten years, a Yorkshire terrier named Bangs. He said young mothers should not keep pets; they were unhygienic but he allowed fish and tortoises and a neighbour's cat that adopted them part-time. Eventually they had to a painful divorce followed by her complete breakdown diagnosed as due to the LSD.

Why he behaved like this may have gone back to his boyhood. He came from Bristol and his parents had terrible rows. When he was ten he came home from

school to be told his mother had died suddenly. In fact his father had committed her to an asylum. He used to say despairingly: *All I am good for is to make people leave me*. It was thirty years before his dying father told him that he had committed her. He took her out of Fishponds Hospital and bought her a good home where she was cared for over many years.

Daughter Jennifer found him a very good, loving father when she was a little girl. When she was a teenager he discouraged her wearing make-up and she had to shoplift to get some lipstick. He sent everyone home during a party because he thought he smelt cannabis.

Islander Molly couldn't find any of these traits in his character. He was very relaxed and polite but economical. After she brought him the morning paper he would tap on her door to bring them to her, minus the coupons for offers which he cut out. He was very fond of British food, such as shepherd's pie. After Jennifer's birth he turned away from film studios saying he had tripped over enough cables, though personalities such as Warren Beatty would often call to persuade him to make another film. Molly remembers him as exceptionally good looking and he spent a lot of time adding to his perfect sun tan. There was a lot of humour such as when he teased her Scottish origins dancing around pretending to play the bagpipes. In Beverley Hills this was about the time of the Manson murder of Sharon Tate, so when he was away he would ask Molly's daughter and son-in-law to stay there and keep her company.

Forgotten Hampshire Writer throws light on Victorian Hidden Agendas

Frank Dilnot (1875-1946) should never be forgotten on Hayling Island where he was born and based his first novels in his early twenties. His talent was recognised early on and he left for London to become a 'descriptive writer' at the *Daily Mail* (1902-1912), eventually rising to be editor of the *Evening Standard*. It is quite likely that he was encouraged by the great editor and social reformer of his day, W.T. Stead, who bought a holiday home on the Island in 1895. Frank's father was manager of the North Hayling oyster beds, a business whose prospects declined after a food poisoning catastrophe involving neighbouring Emsworth's 'fruites de mer' in which Hayling was

unfairly implicated. The family lived at Lawn Cottage on the bends along the Havant Road, just north of Stoke village in the centre of the Island.

In 1912 Frank went to the U.S.A. His nephew Peter, a retired doctor, remembered him as: *a slightly overpowering, overweight, pompous man ... always very kind to me.* Frank married a rich American from New York society. *I thought she was a Red Indian* commented Peter. Frank became editor of the *Daily Citizen*, later *The Globe*. He became President of the Foreign Press Association in New York from 1916 to 1919 when he was honoured with the Cross of the Legion of Honour. In his later career he wrote seven more novels and returned to Britain to become editor of the *Kent County Magazine*.

Frank's three novels set on Hayling Island were: *The Tyrants of North Haben*, *The Worthies of North Haben* (published 1904) and *Love and the Forge*. 'Haben' was his name for Hayling and nearby 'Harton' was Havant. Other place names are 'en clair' such as Warblington, the Yew Tree public house, Castleman's Lane, Copse Lane, West Lane (today a race track often fatal to motor cyclists, then 'a bramble grown farm track'.) His characters were thinly disguised local personalities and it is possible to identify some of them, particularly the vicar and lord of the manor. Local historians, such as Noel Pycroft can draw from the memories of residents of the time to place many of the less prominent residents.

Principal locations of the action are still to be seen, such as the Old Forge at the end of Copse Lane in Stoke now beautifully restored with its stable door. Today it looks onto the main Havant Road, a nightmare of endless traffic punctuated by horrendous traffic jams, stretching for up to seven miles on a sunny week-end in summer.

The Tyrants of North Haben starts outside this forge. Dilnot described:

.... a straggling green island with an irregular main road running from the northern end to the beach and lanes leading nowhere the only noise is the whirr of a distant mowing machine, the boom of a bumble bee and the far away barking of a dog ... Farmer Dick Carey approaches from Lawn Farm leading a horse.

Since this was also author Dilnot's home address the character (but not the story) may have been loosely based on himself.

Unfortunately the blacksmith, William, and his brother and sister, are very independent as they also have a prosperous farm. Dick Carey has upset them by letting his horse drink at their pool without invitation so when he asks for his horse to be shod the answer is 'No!' This is surprising since they had shod Dick's father's horse for years but to the blacksmith Dick was seen as a man getting too big with his 'grand words'. He also wore a 'linning shirt'. *What right had a man working on the ground to wear a linning shirt?* Dick also had 'eddication'. His prodigal brother, Phil, had returned from London an 'oozebird' who suffered from 'freaks' after too much drinking. Worse still part of Dick's land was mortgaged! A few days earlier this hostility flared into a fight in the Blue Lion at Harton.

At this refusal Dick is hurt but turns the other cheek though brother Phil had got in a blow of a different kind, burgling the blacksmith and running away.

Dick's girl-friend, Nellie, was the daughter of the biggest farmer and Churchwarden, identified in real life as Carpenter Turner. She also didn't find favour because she wore a Leghorn straw hat:

.... played tum tum on the pyanner, neither 'Bonnie Dundee' nor 'Home Sweet Home' nor anything one can understand, nothing but this here new-fangled tum tum all day long and driving in a pawny trap. Pawny trap here, pawny trap there

Hayling Island then, as now, is a pear-shaped Island linked by a bridge to the mainland at Langstone. On the surface it was a close-knit community of only eight square miles but there were social fissures, particularly between the watering place of South Hayling with its beach, bath house and pretensions such as a Crescent in the style of Bath itself, a Palladian style library and Regency hotel. These were by a West End architect (who built the lower end of Regent Street) and a developer responsible for the brilliantly successful project at Bognor, patronised by King William IV. These southern residents were looked at 'with something like contempt' by the farming community of the northern half, a patchwork of over twenty farms ranging from nineteen

to two hundred acres packed into the few square miles of arable land hemmed in between Langstone and Chichester harbours.

The fascination for the modern reader is that this was a story about events at the cusp between the olde world of centuries, reaching beyond the Norman Conquest to the twenty-first century of gridlocked roads and greenfield building beneath vapour trails from airliners flying between Gatwick and the world. Within ten years the jaws of the twentieth century snapped on these communities: in 1912 a Bristol Boxcar biplane landed on Hayling Beachlands and the first cars had already shattered the peace of gravel lanes, canopied by trees and fringed by the comforting ambience of a smiling sea. (The latter not escaping a row at Langstone Bridge with the toll keeper who couldn't find any tariff for a horseless carriage in the lists for two or four-wheeled carts drawn by one or two or even four horses. Talk about new-fangled!) Already in the 1860s a single-track railway line had pierced the Island north to south bringing the hoi polloi from the East End of London though they rarely if ever strayed into North Hayling's rural complex so this aspect hadn't penetrated the social fabric of the North. Mixed farming dominated to the exclusion of all else with mangel-wurzels a most appreciated crop while most residents spent any spare time in the garden growing fruit and veg, keeping bees and brewing with wild hops. A day's work for a fee of eight pence in today's money was nose-ringing a pair of sows. Rush hour traffic on the Havant Road, now almost impossible to cross at peak periods, consisted of dragging an awkward bull to market in Havant via a cornfield, a tennis court and anywhere else it chose to stray and sulk. A field hand would go to work with half-a-gallon of beer in his bindle. Eighty acres of prime farmland with the highest yield of wheat in the country was auctioned for £1,800.

Dangerous tensions were stirred up by newcomer Mr Curtain, a Portsmouth businessman, who had made a small fortune restoring run down cottages in Gosport. He envied he status of the Churchwarden, gentleman farmer Brierley, and whipped up the Parish Church Council against him. There were 'shocking scenes' in St Peter's vestry. The vicar complained by letter from the faraway vicarage of St Mary's (two miles) and imposes a ban, but Brierley had to resign, allegedly after the P.C.C. were inebriated thanks to Mr Curtain. Thank heaven this would never happen today....

At this time in real life a major event occurred which affects life on the Island and Southsea to this day: despite enthusiastic support for the plan in Portsmouth the quarrelsome Northney P.C.C. somehow found the authority to vote down a proposal to build a transporter bridge at the ferry end of the Island. In our day this would have saved untold gallons of petrol and ages of time. But what about those yobbos who could have walked and cycled over to harass Hayling?

Events ran their inexorable course. Dick's land was flooded. It was even hinted that 'Roaring sluice' was deliberately left open. His mortgage was foreclosed and his property auctioned at the Yew Tree. But romance reared its sensuous head. Nellie and Dick declared their love on a seat in West Lane. They married, so Dick was, naturally, appointed manager of Brierley's farm, the largest in the district.

The blacksmith got his comeuppance in the sequel, *Love and the Forge*. Fearing another burglary he converted his gold coin savings into the new-fangled bank notes which he hid for safety in his neighbour's barn. It burned down! Noel Pycroft claimed that such a fire actually occurred in 1880 and today we can see evidence in new buildings erected two years later. No lives were lost, thanks to the courage of a young, native Hayling Islander who had travelled to South Africa, prospered and returned just in time to rescue the two servant girls trapped in their white nighties at the top of the blazing building.

This incident revealed more negative aspects of village life. Perversely, the fire was blamed on the hero despite his courage which cost him severe burns and ruined clothes. (Well he was the only man around at the time, wasn't he?) He had also inspired a rare wave of public spiritedness, forgiving the scheming blacksmith family for everything and holding a meeting on the beach to discuss the formation of a cricket club. He was supporting the flower show when he was ignominiously arrested, put on trial and sent to jail for several months.

Sexual intrigue also features. Sarah Tullibard, oldest of the three spinster daughters of the late lord of the manor, was distinguished with an olive complexion, dark hair and a rebellious temperament. Being over thirty she

secretly hungered *for a dozen things which were her nature's right* She met 'unread' Harry Paynter, without refinement but handsome with an electric personality. Assignations and intimacy occurred down dark Copse Lane. The pregnancy meant she was driven out of the Manor House by her sisters to bring up her baby in lonely little Copse Cottage in the woods with a big, fruitful orchard 'always a joy to the possessor'! She was also consoled with a two-hundred pound share of the family income and a lump sum for part of the Manor House and furniture. The vicar waited bare-headed (presumably still respectful) in the ivy-draped porch to help her and the babe to their Exodus in an open chaise. In real life he would have reflected that there was a whole hostel of unmarried mothers in South Hayling without a penny to bless themselves, who were driven in closed coaches to his Sunday services.

A reassuring feature of these stories is the way the church tried hard to help people despite an atmosphere of prejudice and suspicion. After the row in the parish council the curate tries to heal the breach with a visit to the blacksmith at the forge. He tries the front and side doors twice before William emerges to tell him *stop fiddling with our front door* *All our women folk is out today* He bluntly accused the Reverend of being *a pretty bright liar* before returning to harvest his kidney potatoes. Later the vicar passionately preaches for forgiveness for the unmarried mum *It is doubtful whether, in the seven hundred years the South Haben church has stood, a gathering within its walls has ever been so staggered by a preacher* His reward was that the blacksmith accuses him of being the father! The vicar also bravely leads a party into the inferno of blazing stables to rescue horses, claspng a knife to cut them free. In real life this must have been Reverend Clarke, the longest serving vicar on the Island who eventually married one of Sarah's sisters and thereby comes to reside in the Manor House. Later he becomes blind and parish magazines have tended to suggest he became intolerant and censorious, constantly criticising the congregation for the low offertory. I suspect he was right!

Hayling Gold

Did you spend too much on Christmas presents? Would you like to afford a holiday in the sun to get you through the winter months? *The Times* tells us that the price of gold bullion has leapt from \$250 an ounce twenty years ago to a record over \$1,000 today. Did you know that according to the renowned medical journal *The Lancet* there is no less than 100 million tons of gold drifting around in the oceans? So why not solve your financial problems down on Hayling beach prospecting for gold?

Seriously, this was the idea of two men when they came to Hayling exactly a century ago. One was W. L. Peet, from Portsmouth, who started researching the idea on Southsea beach, then Brighton pier. Supporters of his first syndicate faded away but Peet remained convinced that the gold was there; it was just the actual method of extraction that was the problem. Open beaches were too exposed to tide and wind. What was needed was a sheltered location where the tides rose and fell gently, bringing constant supplies of fresh sea water which could settle to allow any gold to be extracted. Providentially, it seemed, an ideal opportunity rose just across Langstone harbour – on Hayling. This story is told with the help of information from an article by Alan Stanley, in the magazine *Yesterday* edited by a former editor of the Hayling Islander, Nigel Peake.

Since Roman times Hayling had been a centre of the sea salt industry. Seawater in the creeks was confined in pools and left to evaporate and become more saline. The brine was then pumped to steamy huts where it was boiled to produce an impure form of salt, brown and grey in colour. This was refined again to produce the fine white salt which had a magnificent flavour, exported as far away as the Mediterranean. Any gold might have been found in the salt or the 'bittern', the water remaining from these processes. As well as the sea salt, medical substances such as the laxative Glauber's salt and the purgative Epsom salt were also produced. Traces of gold may have assisted the medical effect of these. A well-known Hayling Islander who died last year in his eighties told me that his father, who lived in West Sussex, used to take Epsom salts as a cure for anything and everything – and it seemed to work.

The salt trade died slowly in the nineteenth century, replaced by industrial methods of producing salt in Cheshire. At about this time mud, dumped from the excavations for the new Portsmouth naval port, ruined the natural oyster beds offshore. Islanders turned some of the saltings into oyster farms. In turn this industry came to grief when a number of dignitaries at a banquet in Winchester got food poisoning from Emsworth oysters, dragging Hayling's good name down as well.

So Peet was presented with what he hoped would be a golden opportunity to practise his method of getting the precious metal from the sea using the abandoned sites and buildings on Hayling. They started with a site at the Ferry then switched to the tide mill down Mill Rythe Lane and the Mengham Rythe saltings beside Salterns Quay. He literally pooled his ideas with a Henry James Snell who had written to the national press in 1900 claiming he had discovered how to extract gold from the sea by an 'almost automatic method which cost six shillings (30 pence) for every 10 lbs of gold obtained'. This would be worth about \$64,000 today, a fantastic rate of return you must agree. But more sober estimates in those days said there was one pennyworth of gold in every ton of seawater. Incidentally Snell also claimed to be a playwright, a poet and inventor so he can't avoid the accusation of being a charlatan. Unfortunately he headed the drive to raise money for the project with dubious claims.

Both Peet and Snell believed that the key to success lay in passing the seawater over mercury so it would combine to form an amalgam. In 1903 Peet actually took out a patent involving straining the seawater to remove seaweed and passing it through vertical tanks with perforated plates, containing mercury. At the top of the tanks chamois leather was placed to catch any mercury which overflowed. Operations on Hayling were secret and it is said that iron bars were fitted to the windows, but some Islanders caught sight of what was going on inside and reported that there was a heater in the tide mill. It was even hinted that at Mengham Rythe there was an alembic, the distilling apparatus used by medieval alchemists to turn base metal into gold. Perhaps the mercury was heated to aid the combination with gold. Certainly globules of mercury have been found where the tide mill once stood, in the

bricks and stones of the quay, and a larger quantity of mercury was once found there which was buried in concrete to prevent pollution. All Islanders with memories of this business agree that black boxes laden with heavy mercury were taken by taxi straight to the station and on to London for analysis.

The quest for Eldorado on Hayling seemed to have petered out for good in the 1920s. The family of Mrs Susannah Nockolds, Lord of the Manor of Hayling, owned Salterns Quay, then known as Quay Cottage, from 1925 till 1961. She writes that her father, Admiral Fisher, told her about the gold production venture but the impression was that it was not commercially viable, short-lived and ended in bankruptcy. He never thought of trying it but did think of setting up a business farming lobsters and eels. Records show that salt production at Mengham ended in 1877 and the pond nearby was referred to as oyster beds. But there are no records of the gold enterprise though the Salt House and Black Shed used in the search for sea gold are still there, now used by Mill Rythe Sailing Club. Any shares and loan notes in the scheme probably ended up in waste paper baskets along with millions of other shares which went down in the slump of 1929. The tide mill at Mill Rythe burned down since.

But do not despair. Stanley's article states that in two months half an ounce of gold was obtained from the sea at Hayling. This was a century ago and one wonders what the result would be using modern filtration techniques. As we run out of mineral resources on dry land the sea may be our last resource of gold, silver, platinum ... See you down there!

Do any Islanders have memories of the search for gold on Hayling – or remember hearing stories about this told by their parents or grandparents? Please let us know at the *Hayling Islander*.

Text of letter to Susanna Nockolds:

Dear Susanna,

Hope you are well. Thank you so much for your letter of the 19th November and the information you give us.

At last I have got something that might interest you. It is an account of the gold operations on Hayling at the beginning of the last century. It appeared in a history magazine, Yesterday, published by the Portsmouth News in the 1970s/early 80s. I remember it was a very good publication with especially good illustrations but the News shut it down, probably because it could not possibly have been much of a money spinner.

You will see that the two men involved in the gold venture were a Mr Peet and Henry James Snell. I don't know whether you ever heard either of these names. The only Peet on the Island I know of today is a retired optician but I can't connect his family with the project – yet.

The name Snell is familiar because in the 1920/30s a Captain Ivan Snell bought Mengham House, which would have been nearly opposite your family home, across the water on the west end of My Lord's Pond. There in the 19th century were some saltings, later oyster beds. He was a respectable individual, one-time magistrate in London.

Ivan and Henry James may have been related I suppose. Ivan bought the house cheap because it was not well built but the land included Tournerbury woods and Tournerbury farm so it was a good spec. He was a bit of an artist and encouraged amateur drama by converting his barn into a theatre. The fact that Henry James Snell claimed to write plays may be evidence of a relationship.

Ivan Snell was involved in the Hayling Island Sailing Club when it was at Mengham quay beside your old house. Then he was one of the leaders of the project which took it to Sandy Point, where it is today in all its glory. (They've had a big investment from the National Lottery to bring its facilities up to standard.) The move happened just before the start of the Second World War.

I can quite understand that what your father told you about the gold project is lost in the mists of time. However, there is evidence today that recovering gold from the sea was carried out in what they called the Black Shed beside the quay near your house. Nearby there is also a brick building, today called the Salt House. I guess that they might not have been part of your father's property so could have been rented for the purpose. In the shed there is a big tank with a channel from the sea and in the brick building there is evidence of a furnace. I confess I have not seen these for

myself but I have been invited to inspect. They say the windows have bars. We intended to visit last Monday but it rained heavily all day, so postponed.

Today these are the premises of the Mengham Rytte Sailing Club, established about 50 years ago first as a station for fishing, then it developed into a thriving sailing club. I remember risking my life in the 60s in a rowing boat from there, fishing at the mouth of the harbour.

On the other side of the water, at Mill Rytte in a building once a tidal mill, there is also definite evidence that gold was looked for, as the article indicates. The present owner tells me that they still find globules of mercury in crevices in the bricks. A Mr Grady, father or grandfather of the present undertaker, used to take the black metal boxes to the station in his taxi where they went to London to assess the results.

Incidentally a few hundred yards west of your old family home is Pond Head, the home of novelist Nevil Shute from 1940 to 51, where he wrote A Town Called Alice etc. It is said that he met with some people in the aforementioned Salt House to hold séances. There are some very speculative ideas about connections between local places (e.g. St Mary's Church) and the Knights Templar and other arcane ideas. (Have you seen my small book about the Holy Grail on Hayling? If not I will send you a copy.)

People don't realize that Nevil Shute had this interest in the supernatural. I was told a few months ago that when he died, suddenly, in a remote house in Australia, he was working on a novel about Jesus' second coming, in Australia! He lost a lot of his friends in air accidents between the wars, e.g. on the R101, plus his brother in the First World War. His two daughters were educated on Hayling and were Guides here. They must have been about twenty years older than you and are still alive, in the US and Australia. One was coming to visit this year in connection with a conference on her father in Southsea. But she stayed home because her husband was ill.

Probably all these houses had a history of salt production followed by oysters when the salt market collapsed in the 19th century. The oyster businesses collapsed at the beginning of the twentieth century after a shocking case in which some dignitaries in Winchester died of food poisoning after eating EMSWORTH OYSTERS (NOT HAYLING'S). Not surprising since their oyster beds were down water from their sewage pipes. Hayling oysters were prized for years and in the C18th boats came from as far away as Whitstable to raid the beds for their seed oysters. Today a few oysters are still sold from here and I have seen boxes being loaded up at the fishmonger's near my house on the way to the West End. There used to be huge banks of oysters off Southsea, which were ruined

when they dredged for Portsmouth Dockyard, at the behest of Admiral "Jackie" Fisher.

So your father's idea was a good one. The trouble is the capital cost of setting the business up on the right scale. Someone tried in north-west Hayling in the 1970s and walked away with big debts, leaving a lot of concrete and rusty metal. A young lady got a grant to do something about fifteen years ago and I remember seeing her tanks with oysters being cleaned. She might still be there. The trouble is that it is cold, damp work. Well, I hope I haven't wasted your good time with all this. I haven't been the same since I was taught to type during National Service.

Many thanks and very best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Victor Pierce Jones.

PS I don't know whether I ever told you but you realize that another little girl who lived close to your old home in the 1950s was Stephanie Lawrence, the West End star of Evita and Blood Brothers etc., in the 80s and 90s. She died tragically a couple of years ago. As a new-born in about 1950 she was left at a 'luvvies' boarding school in Sea View Road run by a Mr George Lawrence. Mum and dad never reclaimed her. I was so upset when she died. She was a wonderful singer and charming personality. She must have been a little bit younger than your good self.

Was this Hayling's Golden Era?

Two thousand years ago the community on this district was riddled with one-upmanship with the better off competing to build the biggest houses and get the best treatment while ordinary folk put up with whatever was left over. (No change, then, you might think!)

This is the conclusion from new archaeology by Professor Michael Fulford of Reading University. His work was actually on the site of the Roman town of Silchester which the Romans named Calleva Atrebatum, after the tribe that occupied the territory in the first century BC. They had arrived from across the Channel, the part of France now the modern city of Arras and came with the latest Iron Age advances in weapons, and equipment, especially valuable being their horse drawn ploughs. With these they were able to clear useful

space in the ancient woods to grow crops and tend horses, cattle and sheep. They pushed aside the existing inhabitants who were only hunter gatherers: fishermen, rabbit catchers and berry pickers. In the words of the Romans: *They came to steal but stayed to farm*. These people must have landed first in and around Hayling but penetrated inland so they soon had two strong centres: Hayling with its cult site which became their temple in Northney and a central fortification the nine acre Tournerbury fort just north of Mengham. The other was the settlement of Calleva Atrebatum marked today by the ruins of Silchester forty miles due north, near today's Basingstoke.

It was under the ground here that that Professor Fulford discovered 'one of the largest prehistoric buildings known from ancient Britain'. He announced it in *The Times* of the 11th January this year as originally thought to be 24 metres long, but later extended to 44 metres (143 feet) but may have been longer. Even more surprising was that there were several more buildings approaching this scale. Probably the oldest was a lofty rectangular hall built of posts 15 metres high and 4.5 metres wide. This was replaced by the longer hall which in turn was replaced by a modest round house only five metres in diameter. This differed from the larger buildings because inside it were luxury goods, including imported continental table wares, suggesting an elite residence. These developments took place over several generations about the year 20 BC. Professor Fulford believes that this activity reveals a community that was always thrusting and looking for improvements.

Their significance to Hayling was that we had, in those distant days a satellite township and what happened there probably also occurred on our Island. We also shared a religion that rejected the principal cult of those days – the mystical Druids with their belief in an afterlife. This gave them faith not to fear death so in battle they showed extraordinary courage in the face of danger. Consequently the Druids were also feared by the Romans. When Julius Caesar invaded the province of Gaul, France, he discovered Romans had a natural alliance with the Atrebates. The greatest breakthrough must have been when Julius Caesar promoted the cavalry leader Commius to be the king of the Atrebates. This was partly because Commius rode at the head of sixty men to the defence of Caesar in his second incursion into Britain in 55 BC when his treacherous cavalry leader, Volusenus, failed to turn up. But

there may have been a personal aspect. Caesar never had any sons of his own and saw the brave and brilliant Commius as potentially an adopted son and heir. This resulted in a jealous attack on Commius by Roman officers. He escaped with a serious injury and fled to Hayling where he vowed never to meet with a Roman again.

Later, when the Romans invaded this part of Britain in AD 43, Commius' son was ruling. Hayling Islanders gave them a good welcome, facilitating their landing, perhaps in the vicinity of Langstone. This was an especially good move for Hayling when the greatest Roman warrior, later Emperor, Vespasian, chose this vicinity to launch his conquest of south western Britain, as far as Maiden Castle.

So for the four of Romans occupied Britain, Hayling must have enjoyed an unprecedented golden era. One feature of this was the development of an Iron Age/Roman temple in North Hayling. This comprised a central tower, possibly taller than any building in modern Hayling, surrounded by a sacred walled 'cella', or enclosure, in which priests conducted rites and stored their arcane knowledge. They could be approached by people seeking spells for good luck and treatments for illnesses. In support the land around the temple featured acres of land in which holy men (and imposters) dedicated shrines and sacred plots for growing natural health products and raising animals, fungi and herbs with potential medical value. The modern archaeologists who surveyed the district in the 1970s found many skeletons of small creatures which could have been tended for health benefits. Incidentally this was not all. The Atrebates here coined perhaps the earliest currency in Britain which enabled them to encourage trade with other tribes and communities in Britain and the Continent. Even after the Romans left, and the district was ruled from Fishbourne Palace, near Chichester, pilgrims came to the temple developing the wadeway at Langstone to reach the Island at low tide. When the Saxons arrived they were superstitiously nervous about the temple site. It was neglected and much of the stone was used for their homes and farms. In modern times some of the remains have been incorporated in modern gardens – in some cases far away from Hayling.

An Interview with Henry Cutting

Just a few notes regarding the interview I had with an elderly man, Henry Cutting, who frequented the Royal Oak pub in Langstone High Street. (He lived there with a wonderful talking grey parrot!) Somebody put me up to him because he seemed to want to tell his story.

He got a job at Nevil Shute's aeroplane factory beside Portsmouth airport on the very day he left school. He was interviewed by Nevil Shute and warned to be scrupulously honest when there. Shute (real name Norway) would leave a half-a-crown (12½p) on his desk and told Henry to clean the top every day. This meant moving the money but he put it carefully back every time!

Incidentally I don't think he said that he thinks he is mentioned in *Slide Rule*, being the 'scamp of an office boy' or words something like that. These points are based on the interviews I and my friend had with him and also a talk he gave to our society. This was called the Bosmere Hundred Society because this district was known as the Hundred of Bosmere in the Domesday book compiled by William the Conqueror to assess taxes after the battle of Hastings 1066.

Re. the story about the fire extinguisher in the Buick car: When he told it to the society he said that Nevil Shute was coming through the door when the thing went off and was also showered with the powder. If he had come out a second or so later he might have taken a direct hit and even been seriously injured! But he took the incident it very well, only explaining patiently what it was and Henry had to tidy it all up.

Henry told the story to support the point that Nevil Shute was always around and he was always at hand to help. When there was an explosion and fire in the factory (caused when someone put petrol in a fuel tank before it was welded) he appeared on the scene out of nowhere stepping through the blazing sacking draped round the wood shop to keep the sawdust out of the rest of the factory. (See the sailing incident below for evidence of his presence of mind.)

Re. the plane that crashed into the mud of Langstone harbour: Henry saw them pulling it out and he had to clean off the mud.

He also told us a story which illustrates Nevil Shute's point about air accidents usually being traced to human error. When he and another boy were walking across the aerodrome early one morning they came across two men who were getting a plane out of the hanger. They asked the boys to help push it out, started the engines and flew off. But the plane stalled and crashed on the perimeter. Both men were killed. The reason was that they had not given the engines time to warm up. (20 minutes or more with that kind of engine.)

Re. not being allowed in the men's toilets: The threat was that he would have his head put down the pan! I guess this was because the men didn't want anyone in the office to know what was said or done in the workers' toilets. The men presumably let off steam about the foremen, etc. This kind of class distinction was usual in British offices and factories, not so apparently in the USA.

Re. the story of the boy who had been birched: He said that he was once put over a bench and spanked for swearing in the factory. *I never swore in a factory again!*

Points about Nevil Shute on Hayling: When he was at home in Pond Head he would be seen driving a big lawn mower on the lawns which sweep down to the creek and obviously enjoyed it. Pond Head was built in 1910 by a doctor. I suspect he got to know of it being for sale through his wife's medical connections. Historically the pond was an oyster farm and before that part of a salterns where they boiled sea water to make sea salt. (The district was famous for this and had a huge trade in it until the Cheshire salt mines produced salt in greater quantities and cheaper. In Havant's St Faith's churchyard there is the grave of a man who was killed when a load of salt fell off a cart on top of him.)

If you are in touch with Nevil Shute's daughters, they might like to know that the lady who was their Guide mistress, Ena Dunster, is now gravely ill with cancer. The school they went to on the sea front is now called Bay View Court

and is split up into apartments. It was originally the home of John Glas Sandeman, of the Sandeman port and sherry wine business, who was in the Heavy Brigade which charged at the battle of Balaclava and was also a bodyguard of Queen Victoria. He founded Hayling golf club from there.

Re. Nevil Shute and Langstone: He only lived at the Mill with his family for a while, en route for Hayling from Southsea in June 1940. They went there because of the bombing of Portsmouth/Southsea which intensified after the British retreat from Dunkirk leaving the Germans with many airfields on the French coast. He was invited to stay there by artist Flora Twort (whom he once proposed to, according to Langstone local historian Ann Griffiths.) It was her holiday home. He visited occasionally during the war when the estate of The Tower (on the other side of the road from Henry's house. He mentioned The Tower was owned by the lord of the manor and the chapel there he also mentioned.) According to Griffiths the land adjacent to this was acquired during the war by the government for a satellite of the Airspeed factory, making and storing wooden parts, e.g. for the Horsa glider. Today there are houses on the site but you can see the site of the factory gates which is now indicated by a circular flower bed you must have driven past, just before you reached Henry's home. (Ann Griffiths points out that Henry didn't really know much about Shute in the 1940s because Shute had left the factory.) I don't think Henry visited Pond Head.

Henry emphasized in some of the interviews how hard up the company was in the early days. They would sometimes have to call the men together and explain they couldn't pay them that week. When he got those half-crowns he was amazed because even some of the bosses weren't getting any money from the business themselves. Times changed with the China/Japan war of 1936. Both sides were desperate to get planes and Henry described how they were amazed when a test pilot came back from the Far East with a cheque for £10,000. They had never seen such money. The firm didn't like selling planes for warfare. They were sold without armaments and when they saw them being fitted with bomb bays after the sale there was nothing they could do about it. Henry says that Airspeed planes were used in the film Inn of the Seventh Happiness which is about that period.

Re. also Hayling Island: Chute had a 40 foot boat called Runagate but couldn't have kept one there during the war because it would have been regarded as being of potential use to an invader. I am informed confidentially by a lady who knew him well that he left because there was a row when he found someone had tied their boat to his mooring at the Sailing Club. It was alleged he untied the boat and left it to drift away which is an unforgivable sin in those circles. My informant said he had an angry row in the office and she *had never heard such swearing in her life*. He was asked to leave the club by the Commodore, it is alleged. My informant said it was her friend who used the mooring. He was in a hurry to get ashore because he was not well.

On the more creditable side she also described an incident in which Nevil Shute was anchored in a Wooton Creek in the Isle of Wight when there was an explosion on one of the yachts caused by a gas stove cylinder. Dr Wright's wife (whom Shute knew well) was blown into the water and Nevil Shute jumped in to save her. Dr Wright was the resident doctor at a tuberculosis sanatorium at Sandy Point. He bought the land nearby to build houses for use of members of the sailing club. After 1945 the holiday camp and funfair entrepreneur Billy Butlin wanted to buy the land to build a holiday camp. He was fiercely opposed by Dr Wright and Mr Cross the local councillor. They enlisted the support of others, including Nevil Shute. They formed a company named Sandy Point Ltd which bought the land. They set up tennis court and The Hollies caravan site which is still there. The company still exists, though I don't expect any of the Norway family keep their shares. Dr Wright's daughter and granddaughter seem to have the majority interest. The daughter married a very successful antiquarian bookseller with offices in the best part of London, Berkeley Square, Mayfair. The grand daughter is a distinguished marine biologist. The firm recently bought a manuscript of a James Joyce novel for a seven figure sum and sold it to the Irish government at a profit. Ena Dunster's (Shirley and Heather's Guide mistress) son keeps an eye on that site and they send him a few bottles of wine every year as thanks. Cross, Wright, Shute etc., would meet at Landfall near the sailing club and discuss their moves. Cross's daughter, now Lady Mackworth, remembers these meetings well.

Lady Mackworth, known to all as 'Baba', would have been the kind of girl Shute would have used as a character. Good looking and an expert sailor, she was the daughter of Cross. She married a young man Mr Sparkes and together they sailed, repaired and built boats on the site which is now Sparkes Marina and the Sailing Club. Sparkes died in an accident but left his name to the marina. They did not obtain a financial interest because Shute and the consortium had to sink real money into it and the Sparkes weren't well off. When a young widow Baba met Sir David Mackworth at a sailing club dance in France and they married.

Apart from sailing one friend was a Mr Pook who has only recently died on Hayling, his sister is still alive. He lived in Webb Lane opposite the cinema and had lived more or less in the same area for the whole of his life. The kind of experiences they may have shared was when the Island was the centre of Operation Fabius, a rehearsal for the D-Day landings in France, June 1944. No one knew about it until the early morning when they woke to find the ditches (e.g. in Webb Lane), which were the most common method of surface water drainage at that time, full of troops with guns and equipment. Civilians were ordered to keep their curtains drawn and not look out. Letters from Hayling were partly censored at the time and this may have cramped Shute's style.

On Hayling Shute MUST have known and met Air Chief Marshal Sir Roderick Hill. He lived at The Shallows a house in Woodgaston Lane, North Hayling, only three miles away from Pond Head. He was a bomber pilot in the First World War. Between the wars he was a major figure at RAF Farnborough involved in a lot of the research there. During the war he became head of Britain's air defences, then head of Fighter Command. After the war he became Principal of Imperial College. London and died of heart attack in the streets of Kensington about the same age as Shute. His son was killed in the war. Like Shute, his daughters are still alive. Perhaps they were friends. Does Heather remember her?

A story about The Shallows.

It was built without a staircase! Someone slipped up over the plans! I think they had to put in an exterior set.

The Iron Age/Roman Temple at Northney

The temple is situated in Towncil Field, roughly 2/300 metres south-west of St Peter's Church. It may be approached by a footpath which curls from behind the church but it is emphasised that though the footpath is open to the public the farm land round it is private property and valuable farmland so should not be crossed without permission.

The mound containing the masonry of the temple was known to Islanders for centuries but not investigated until a few years just before the First World War when Talfourd Ely, the bursar of a London College worked on it. But he only came after the harvest and when he had a few weeks left of his summer vacation. He always worked alone. Even so many features of the site were acquired by local people and a glass cabinet of artefacts is believed to have been kept at the Hayling School of those days, now Mill Rythe Junior School. This may now have disappeared. It is likely that much of the masonry and other artefacts etc ended up in people's gardens. I know one case in particular.

During very dry summers of the middle 1970s crop marks appeared which were particularly noticed by helicopters researching aerial photography. They appeared to show foundations of a round tower surrounded by a rectangular enclosure. This motivated digs by archaeologists from Winchester in 1974/6 et seq. They discovered the origin of the site dated to the first century BC the work of the Atrebates tribe, Belgic Celts, originating from the region round Arras in northern France. They expanded to Britain. *They came to steal but stayed to plough.* Eventually they expanded north to Silchester (near Basingstoke) and west to about Marlborough. Their temple was probably timber and seemed to have become their cult site. It was confirmed under their leader, a brilliant cavalry man, Commius, who was recognised and highly praised by Julius Caesar appointing him to be King of the Atrebates. (He probably saved Caesar's life on his second visit to Britain in 54 BC when the regular Roman cavalry didn't turn up.) The Romans and Atrebates were united by a fear of the Druids who believed in an after-life which inspired them to outstanding feats of courage. So the temple may have been a way of repudiating druidic influence. (Was it built on a druid site?) It

must have been Commius who also confirmed the fort at nearby Tournerbury Woods.

The Romans arrived in strength in about AD 46 under the strong generalship of Vespasian who went on to conquer the south coast as far as Maiden Castle. Eventually the Romans captured the whole of England. A superstitious people they adopted the temple and replaced the timber work with masonry, typically the light grey mixon limestone they quarried from Selsey. This was a hard wearing material but surprisingly soft and easy to shape.

Under them the tower was as tall as any in Hayling today. It may have been cylindrical or conical and have had a coloured glow e.g. pink. The sacred space surrounding it, 'cella', was also surrounded by a wall indicating it was only for the priests. The custom was for people seeking cures or religious intervention to go to the gates with their petitions and the priests would dispense whatever (for a big price probably). There were indications of holes for poles which may have held trophies or even bodies (exhumation) as Parsees do today. The cella was surrounded by a large area in which temple servants grew crops and kept animals for treatments and spells, etc. e.g. there were many skeletons of mice. A hippocampus brooch was found (sea horse). This was displayed at the British Museum some years ago in an archaeological exhibition organized by the Prince of Wales.

At one stage the temple may have hosted a pacifist, self-denying party (early Christians???) e.g. broken weapons and discarded objects of vanity – jewellery, brooches and mirrors. This is why I believe that Jesus Christ may have come there on way to his legendary visit to Glastonbury, with Joseph of Arimathea. After the crucifixion did Joseph return here with the Holy Grail, to show how Jesus wished them to remember Him by drinking wine? Hence, Hayling is 'The Island of the Holy Grail', (see my book *Glastonbury Myth or Southern Mystery* published and copyrighted in 1998).

The Chichester archaeological society gave a presentation a few years ago in the Assembly Rooms in which they reported a memorial to a Roman officer, indicating that at one time it had military connections. A mass grave of about forty young men was found in the general area without wounds or artefacts.

Was there a tragic loss of life due to a sinking? It is possible they were men hurriedly sent to Britain intended to put down the rising by Boadicea.

The temple must have been actively used until after the Romans left in about AD 460. The wadeway tidal path between Langstone and Hayling was probably built to facilitate pilgrims from Fishbourne Palace.

When the Saxons arrived they probably destroyed the temple to get at the stones. They would have been superstitious about the religious aspect – ghosts, curses etc. Was this why there is little evidence of Saxon occupation of Hayling?

Hayling Temple Gives up its Secrets

Fascinating new details about Hayling's Iron Age and Roman temple were revealed at a meeting of the Chichester and District Archaeological Society, in the New Park Centre, Chichester. The presentation was given by Dr Tony King, Professor of Roman Archaeology at Winchester University. He helped lead the excavations there in 1975/6 and returned to the site in 2001/2 for further work. The temple, which is now covered up, lies in a very fertile field southwest of St Peter's Church, Northney, 17 feet above sea level. It was first investigated at the beginning of the last century by a London bursar, Talfourd Ely, who worked alone on the project. He thought it was a Roman villa with an ornamental pond but in the 1960s J. T. Lewis identified it as a temple. Droughts in the 1970s revealed crop marks, which showed a rectangular area surrounding circular foundations and a gateway on the east side, which was marked by a sarsen stone. Archaeologists went to work in 1975. They discovered there were in effect two temples on the site. The first was Iron Age, dating from before 50 BC when Hayling was part of the kingdom of the Atrebates, a tribe who were ethnically Celtic or Belgae. In those days their king, Commius, had agreed a treaty with Rome allowing him to establish his rule in Britain. It featured a roundhouse of timber, surrounded by a timber fence with a gateway on the east side. About seventy years later Commius' descendants improved the original work. In the centre of the roundhouse was a pit where they found ornamental fibulae and brooches suggesting it was a place for ritual or superstitious activity. In an area 40 metres square

the archaeologists found 40,000 shards of pottery. There were coins of the Atrebaean kings, some dating from the first century BC, amongst the oldest in Britain. There were also coins from other parts of Britain and the Continent. One coin, from Brittany, featured the bust of a god, with a headdress, trailing chain and entwined leaves. Some of these bronze coins were forged, actually hollow, probably used symbolically in rituals, not as money. Other interesting finds were weapons, such as spearheads, which had been deliberately broken, also the metal bands from a broken shield. The idea seems to have been to remove them from human use. Some of the ornaments were treated in the same way. A remarkable find was chain mail, which was very rare in the Iron Age. From the same period – before the Romans invaded Britain – there were slashed and defaced coins of Emperor Augustus. Roman historians say that Commius quarrelled with the Romans, but his son, Tincaurus made it up and even visited Augustus in Rome. Other extraordinary finds were beads and brooches, which originated in Poland and the Crimea. Incredibly, some of the latter had metalwork done in Ulster before being brought to Hayling. They also found 25,000 animal bones

When in AD 43 the Romans invaded Britain they were immediately drawn to the site. This suggested Hayling was internationally regarded as a holy Island, mentioned by the Roman historian Plutarch. From the late AD 50s to 70s they replaced the timber roundhouse with a stone tower with a diameter 14 metres bigger than the original. The first archaeologists' report stated the tower was seven stories high, taller than any building in today's Hayling. An embellished stone gatehouse was built at the entrance. This is believed to have been the first masonry temple in Britain. The artificers who built this used some of the techniques as were used in Fishbourne Palace, near Chichester, so this temple was probably associated with the Roman client king, Cogidubnus, who built the palace.

This Roman period lasted to the 3rd century AD when the temple was neglected. Perhaps coastal places like Hayling had become unsafe because of attacks from the sea by pirates and other marauders. Parts of the outer walls collapsed though coins from a later period were found on the site. From the Roman period there were fewer finds. Weapons found suggest the temple was used by a warrior elite, since civilians were not allowed to carry

weapons in Roman times. Professor King suggests the temple was dedicated to the Roman god of war, Mars. An altar stone dedicated to the 9th Legion bore the name of Naevianus. A strange and gruesome discovery was the skeletons of about forty young men. None showed signs of injury and the bones were fly blown suggesting they had lain in the open for some time. Some finds such as a hippocampus – seahorse – brooch, hinted at a cult associated with water.

There were many pigs' heads and the upper limbs of sheep, all about one year old, presumably selected for sacrifice. From the whole period of the temple there were thousands of votive objects and bones indicating pilgrims came to pay for sacrificial rituals. But there were not many ritual objects, such as idols. Professor King believes that over the years the temple was principally a place for pilgrimages and seasonal, religious gatherings of the tribe.

The archaeologists returned to the site in 2001/2 after a geophysical investigation revealed features on the southern side. These were found to be a series of shallow pits, in a crescent formation, believed to be for boiling water for sea salt. These were carbon dated to a date about AD 657. By then the Romans and Celtic kings had left Hayling and the Saxons had arrived.

Hayling's Civil Defences Revealed

A map discovered by Councillor Ralph Cousins gives a comprehensive picture of Hayling's civilian defences in the Second World War. It details a First Aid post, emergency water supplies, civilian air raid shelters, Wardens' posts and an A.R.P depot at Gable Head. This was a cleansing station and centre for rescue parties, road and sewer repair gangs and water repair gangs. ARP stood for "Air Raid Precautions". There were eight Wardens' posts, scattered throughout the Island. Air-raid Wardens could patrol the streets at night in navy blue uniforms with gas masks and helmets. They would shout: *Put out that light*, if anyone dared to show a torch or had a chink in their blackout curtains, attracting the malicious attention of enemy bombers.

Ten shelters are shown on the map, each capable of holding fifty persons. Some are described as type B, surface shelters, others as type C, semi-sunk. They were at Northney, beside St Peter's Institute; by the Esso filling station, on Havant Road; on the water works property at Stoke village; two were situated just south of the children's playground on the path from Station Road to Bacon Lane in Hayling park; one still stands today at the Beach Road entrance to the park; two were near the site of Mengham Junior school; one was by the Rose in June pub; one was on the sea front opposite the Lifeboat pub, just east of where the Beachlands railway station is today. They were uncomfortable places, no windows, of course, nor water, heating or toilet facilities. They usually had hard slatted wooden benches along the walls and down the middle. People had to bring their own blankets and cushions if they hoped to get some sleep. Dossers were strictly forbidden, in any case there were few cases during the war because hardly anyone could avoid being used for 'war work. But in quiet times the shelters were popular with lovers.

Noel Pycroft says that some were built of white bricks because of a shortage of the usual red ones. The one by the park entrance in Beach Road still stands, now used by the Council for storage. This has a rather shallower concrete roof than most. But this may have been because it was discovered that the thicker concrete roofs were a liability if a bomb blast blew down the walls. There was a tragic case in Hollow Lane where a builder adapted his garage to be an air-raid shelter, with a thick concrete roof. When a bomb fell nearby the walls collapsed and the family were crushed under the concrete. It was said they had a cache of jewellery with them and this has never been recovered. None of the shelters would have stood a direct hit. People inside were only safe from flying shrapnel, glass and so on.

Not included on the map is the shelter still standing at the gun site, opposite Sinah Warren, which might have sheltered over a hundred people but these would have been civilian workers or non-combatants working for the gunners. The soldiers would have been expected to be on duty, firing the guns, putting out fires and whatever else was necessary when they were under attack.

The ten shelters indicate that only 600 people were catered for but the map only shows air-raid shelters built for communal use by civilians. These would include people caught away from their homes for one reason or another when the bombers appeared. Many Islanders would have Anderson or Morrison shelters at home, or tucked themselves under the stairs or in cellars, where they felt safe. Anderson shelters (named after Sir John Anderson one of Winston Churchill's government ministers) were corrugated iron structures, usually not big enough for more than four people at the most, half-buried in gardens. There may be several of these still surviving. One, in the garden of a bungalow on the corner of St Leonard's Avenue and St Margaret's Road, was demolished only recently when the building was pulled down for two new bungalows. It showed how cold, damp and uncomfortable they were but thousands of people in Britain's bombed cities such as Portsmouth spent months in them in 1940 and 1941. Morrison shelters (named after Herbert Morrison, Churchill's Home Secretary) were like cages. They could be fitted under tables inside the house to protect people if the walls collapsed but they could have been death traps if the house was set alight.

The map doesn't show any air-raid shelter shelters at Hayling's only state school, now Mengham Junior School, though ex-pupils will tell stories of filing to the marsh for shelter and singing songs to keep up their spirits. There is a story that someone was killed waiting at the bus stop on the other side of the road, near the Pound, when a bomb fell.

Other features shown on the map include a main fire station at the water works, Stoke, and an auxiliary fire station at the east end of Hollow Lane. There were two electric sirens, one on the roof of the Regal cinema opposite the Rose in June and another at the Stoke water works, possibly taking advantage of the water tower on the east side of the road. About twelve pill boxes are shown, with a cluster of six from Verner Common to Pound Marsh, suggesting authorities were sensitive that this was a weak point in the Island's shoreline defences – other sections being well covered by nearby army, navy and marine units. Other features were emergency water supplies for fire-fighting, sometimes in the sea or ponds but a feature of the country in

those days was huge tanks marked EWS (Emergency Water Supply). There was a First Aid post at St Mary's hall.

Langstone is shown in the map as having eight EWS points including one on the middle of the bridge. They had a shelter and a Wardens' post near the High Street and another Wardens' post along the Hayling Billy railway line, half way to Havant station.

Saxon Log Boat Holds Key to the Past

The Saxon log boat found in Langstone harbour may help us understand our environment today as well as give an insight into our past. This is the view of Julie Satchell of the Hampshire and Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology, (HWTMA for short!). She was speaking at the meeting of the Hayling branch of the Bosmere 100 Society in the United Reformed Church hall, Mengham, on the 20th November. The boat was found on the edge of the old channel running into the harbour. When it was raised it was found to be resting on what had been an ancient bed of reeds and grass beside what was one of the fresh water channels all those centuries ago. Analysis of this material, plus the pollen and microscopic organisms, will help determine the salinity of the water in the harbour, one thousand five hundred years ago. From this information it can be worked out how much the harbour has sunk over the years, allowing seawater to penetrate inland. It will also help to show what climatic changes have taken place in this period. Julie pointed out that there have been lots of fluctuations in sea level since Roman and Saxon times. Also valuable will be analysis of the material found in the bottom of the boat, which should reveal exactly what the boat was used for.

Julie showed slides of the boat when it was first discovered in April 2002 by John Cross. Only the bow was sticking up in the mud of the harbour just off the north-west corner of Long Island in the north-east corner of the harbour. Carbon dating of the timber in Britain and Florida revealed it was ancient wood, worth further study. So on 3 September this year members of the Trust plus many helpers began four days' work in the sticky mud to excavate it. Mud dams and a pump kept the site as dry as possible. They had to work quickly, in between tides, which meant only six hours a day but they had

assistance from a number of sources including the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the Langstone Harbour Board, English Nature and private generosity from marine archaeologists Mr and Mrs John Bingeman and well-known local archaeologists, John Male and Arthur Mack. Many people visited the site by boat and national interest was aroused, including the Prime Minister, Tony Blair.

This boat is only the second example of a Saxon log boat found in the Solent area. In 1880 one was found in the Hamble but it was not in good condition. Other examples have been found elsewhere in the country. The section found is about two metres long. The archaeologists were disappointed that they were unable to reclaim the whole boat intact because the timber lower down was splintering.

Interestingly they found that beneath the harbour mud is a layer of peat, this shows that thousands of years ago much of the land now the harbour was covered with vegetation and for a long time it must have been fresh water marsh. The good news is that the peat and mud help preserve wood and other artefacts. For example, not far from the boat they found a bronze-age pathway, suggesting people could walk across this land in those days. Wattle and hurdles found fifty metres away from the boat might have meant that the people using the boat had been gathering shellfish but analysis proved that they dated from the later Saxon period, about the year 900. Unfortunately no other Saxon artefacts were found on the site. These would have given helpful details of Saxon activities since little is known about this aspect of Hayling's history.

The discovery will help us to learn more about also Saxon techniques of carpentry and boat building. The boat is a hollowed out trunk of Oak with the three or four peg holes. These had been driven into the wood by the ancient boat builders to test how thick the hull was, then filled in. Wood technology expert, Nigel Nayling, examined the boat and associated timbers on 21 November.

The original radiocarbon tests only give an age range of about two hundred years, dating it somewhere between AD 410-620. For the time a medial date of AD 500. was agreed. It is hoped later to find a dendrochronological base for

fixing the date to within twenty years. This involves studying the tree rings in the wood and comparing them with similar samples of known date. But for this period of history these are difficult to find.

The log boat is now kept packed and held at the British Ocean Sediment Core Research Facility in the Southampton Oceanography Centre, where it is being cleaned and recorded. It will then be taken to the Mary Rose Trust for conservation. It must be thoroughly dried out and sealed with chemicals. It is likely to be kept permanently in the Portsmouth Museum. Information and updates about the log boat are posted on the Trust's website: www.soc.soton.ac.uk/HWTMA.

Fiftieth Anniversary of Invention of Windsurfing on Hayling

Honour Islander Stephanie Lawrence, says inventor Peter Chilvers.

The inventor of windsurfing, Peter Chilvers, is looking for ways to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of his invention on Hayling. He is particularly interested in celebrating the memory of Stephanie Lawrence, West End musical star and actress, who was brought up on Hayling. She helped him in the early days when he was putting his windsurfing ideas together. Peter told me how he first got to know Stephanie when he was on holiday here. She was only six, he was nine. Two years later they met on their first 'date', playing beside a pond at the end of Higworth Lane, near the path leading to St Mary's Church. It used to be a haven for wildlife but it is now filled in.

Stephanie was living with her parents in Broadview House Boarding School, on the Beach Road end of Westfield Avenue, now the southern end of the Mark Anthony Court site. The school had been established by her father, George, originally for the children of 'luvvies', especially actors on tour. When he was eighteen, Peter was staying in his parents' caravan at Bugg's Farm, off Yew Tree Road. It was in the adjacent creek that he began experimenting with an ironing board and a sheet, gradually devising the technique of windsurfing.

He used to jog to the funfair. One day he was passing the school when he noticed a girl sitting on the wall. She whistled to him and called out: *Don't you know me?* It was Stephanie, now grown into a beautiful young lady, slim and athletic, with long blonde hair, big blue eyes and fresh complexion, truly an English rose.

They got together and she used to come down to the creek to help him perfect his windsurfing idea. He remembers taking her to a party in his car when she burst out singing *I am fifteen going on sixteen*. He told her she had a beautiful voice but she laughed and said she was going to be an actor not a singer. She was about to study at the Arts Education School at Tring where she swept the board, winning four cups, for Singing, Acting, Ballet and Art. Two years later she was sitting on his knee in the Yew Tree public house. In those days she only drank orange juice. Suddenly another beautiful girl entered with her mother and sister. He fell for her and for three days went looking for her round Hayling. He succeeded and eventually she became his wife for 40 years or so.

Both Stephanie and Peter became incredibly busy and obviously drifted apart. Stephanie's father died suddenly in 1969, walking his dog down Westfield Avenue. Aged nineteen, Stephanie had to make her talent pay early. She sought work in the West End and described the economies she had to make such as eating cornflakes with water because she couldn't afford milk. She landed a valuable assignment touring with Lionel Blair, danced on BBC television with Pan's People and eventually broke through to the West End stage in *Cats* and the striking blonde Pearl in *Starlight Express*. Hayling Islanders used to see her practising on her roller skates for that role, skating and jogging between her mother's new home in Creek Road and the funfair. Her great moment came when she landed the lead role of Eva Peron in Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Evita*, and she dominated London's theatre land with her blonde good looks and exquisite voice, which, she was proud to say, never needed a microphone. She was scornful of 'stars' with microphones clamped to their faces. Even then, at the height of her success, she was lonely. She told me how, between rehearsals, she would cross the road from the theatre in Old Compton Street to sit in a restaurant where there was a painting of Hayling, drawing strength from the memory of her island home.

But her attempts to break into even higher ground faltered. In 1988 she starred as 'Buster' Edwards' wife in the film about the great train robber, but she was too gentle a personality for aggressive roles. She went to the USA but it was the days of savage critic Rich, the 'Butcher of Broadway', who gave her a bad review. Back in London she was still the star in the play about Marilyn Monroe, in which she played the main role in *Blood Brothers*. She had a very warm and loving heart and came down to Hayling driving alone through the dark after the last performance on a Saturday night, to appear in a charity show in the King's Theatre, Southsea. The show was absolutely packed out. A legendary tale is that one day driving down the M1 she saw a dog abandoned by the roadside. She stopped to pick it up and 'Scruff' became her inseparable companion. Peter meanwhile was reaping the rewards of his invention but he had to fight to establish his patent rights in courts in London, Canada, Japan, Germany and the USA. The last time he saw Stephanie was when his sister-in-law bought the tickets for *Blood Brothers* for his birthday. He sat in the middle of the front row and when the curtain went up Stephanie was smiling down at him from the stage. It had all been arranged by the ladies. Though Stephanie was still in the starring role of the mother in *Blood Brothers* there may have been some concerns in the background. Her mother died and Stephanie would still come back to their bungalow in Creek Road, alone. Islander Sandra Smith who had a managerial role in the Kings Theatre, and visited Stephanie in the West End, describes how one New Year's Eve Stephanie unexpectedly came to her party in Hollow Lane, alone. She would drink alone in the snooker club in Creek Road to the early hours of the morning. One day in 2000 she phoned me to say she was getting married. Days later the tragic news broke that she had died in her London home, near Putney Bridge, aged fifty.

Peter says: *I have always thought of Hayling as a magical place and Stephanie, bless her, was very much a part of that magic.* It is suggested that her success was always haunted by the fact that her father's school was partly an orphanage and her starring roles, such as Eva Peron and Marilyn Monroe, featured beautiful ladies whose lives ended childless and tragically. Stephanie loved children. As President of Hayling Operatic Society she came to see one of their pantomimes in the United Reformed Church hall,

Mengham. She declined an honoured seat in the hall, insisting on sitting in the front row, talking with the little children.

Extract from *Holly Bush Gazette* – August 1896

How did Victorian children spend their time on holiday on Hayling? (in the days before radio, T.V. and Facebook etc. etc.!)

Here is an extract from a journal kept by children at Holly Bush House, Selsmore Road:.

Preface

In the last number of the *Gazette* we, Pickwick and myself, promised to continue the publication during the absence of the staff (i.e. the Stead family at home in Wimbledon) But alas for the vanity of human expectations we have now to appear before the assembled staff clad metaphorically in sack cloth and ashes to cry ‘mea culpa’ or ‘nostra culpa’ for Pickwick is equally as guilty.

However we withhold further dwelling on this subject. Let us welcome the reappearance of the only journal that exists on this island of Hayling. We have a new staff of contributors and we hope the new series of *Gazettes* will be at least equal to their precursors.

Since the appearance of our last number, Alfred has departed to South Africa and Australia. Otherwise the family circle remains as always.

In Hollybush itself we have made few changes. The most notable are chiefly the arrangement of pictures on the walls, and the more copious use of bamboo as floral decorations and the construction of a dark room for photography and in the rigging up of a shed with corrugated iron and canvass for the sheltering of the old phaeton (carriage) which was originally purchased at a sale in Darlington (where Stead once worked on the *Northern Echo*) now reposes in peace in the backyard.

The months that have passed have been months of droughts. Two thunderstorms and nothing else is heard of the meteorologists. The lack of

moisture has played havoc with the garden. But the well holds out and the thunderstorms rendered washing possible.

The weather being so consistently fine is the chief cause why the *Gazette* has not been kept up. It is a marvel that this number has appeared for there has been this week not one wet day.

The Tournament – Holly Bush, August 7 1896

Whereas certain persons old and young married and single male and female of divers tempers and temperaments have assembled under the roof of Holly Bush Hall in this month of August for the enjoyment of holidays and the pursuit of health. Bee it enacted that the last week of this month certain competitions shall be held open to all residents and visitors to Holly Bush Hall, for which reasons prizes of uncertain value shall be awarded. Participants of these competitions will be announced in due season. In proof hereof is this number of the *Gazette* some announcements appear. But at present it is sufficient to say that these competitions shall come under the following heads (others not yet specified.)

Cycling, see particulars of tournament annexed.

Navigation, rowing and sailing.

Swimming, including diving and floating.

Photography. Emma judge.

Typewriting.

Essays, describing the best way of enjoying a seaside holiday.

Kite flying. 8 Fishing, 9 Collections of wild flowers. 10 Suggestions for sandcastles.

In the next number of *Hollybush Gazette* prizes were promised of succulent money value but of first class honorific worth for the best original suggestions for competitions.

Given under our sign and seal at Hollybush this seventh day of August 1896.

GRAND CYCLE TOURNAMENT

Will be held in the arena at Hayling beach, for the preparation of which Father Neptune as kindly offered his services free, gracias and for nothing.

The sport will be held under the presidency of the Queen of the Tournament who will distribute the prizes to the successful competitors.

Tent pegging with bamboo lance.

Slicing a lemon with sword while riding at full speed.

Cutting off the Turks Head. (Probably turnip on pole.)

Riding between pillars and posts.

Riding without touching handles.

Racing straight and around oval. Quarter, half and one mile.

Steeple chasing.

Handicapping to be fixed so as to make it possible for mother to win on the bicycle or Mrs Bragg (housekeeper) on the tricycle with Dodo seated behind.

TYPEWRITING COMPETITION

The following sentences: The secret of enjoying anything is to do without it. \$1 is equal to 4 shillings therefore one quarter of \$1 is about one shilling (excluding the fraction) x 3. Must be typewritten and time noted on Monday next. In three weeks' time the same sentences must be typewritten and time noted. Prizes will be given for improvement in accuracy and speed.

AMONG THE THINGS TO BE NOTED ARE THE ADDITION OF ONE OF THE OLD RULES. That at tea no tea should be served to any member who shall not have contributed to the amusement of the guests by telling some merry tale or amusing jest.

The vines in the greenhouse are so laden with bunches of grapes that one penny reward is offered to the person who counts them most accurately.

Children's Lives on Hayling in 1900

Fascinating glimpses of children's life on Hayling around the year 1900 come from the *Holly Bush Gazette*, a hand-written and typed paper recording life at the Selsmore Road holiday home of editor and social reformer W. T. Stead. Typical was an account by two girls of what happened after they spent the day on the beach. On the way back they decided to call on the Mengham Congregational church to see how plans for an evening concert were going. They got a surprisingly cool reception from the Minister, Revd Spelt. He asked them why they weren't wearing their bonnets or stockings. They explained they had just come from the beach but he did not seem to be too pleased. Before coming to Hayling he had been a missionary in Portsmouth Harbour where he had probably seen enough of some kinds of casual behaviour by girls! The Reverend's Portsmouth experience was not wasted on Hayling, though. Two men were drowned at the mouth of Chichester Harbour working on a gravel barge from Portsmouth. He was able to identify them and get urgent support for their families.

Stead was the son of a Congregational Minister at Howden, near Newcastle. He believed passionately that *The pen is mightier than the sword* and conducted many campaigns as editor of *The Pall Mall Gazette* (later the *Evening Standard*) and his monthly *Review of Reviews*. Stead himself was a tireless campaigner against abuse of girls especially supporting the Act of Parliament raising the age of consent to sixteen. On the other hand he encouraged social attitudes which allowed greater freedom. He appointed the first women journalists and sub editors. He especially encouraged woman and girls to spend healthy days out on bikes. He even encouraged them to cycle to Hayling and camp in his Hayling garden, looked after by Mrs Stead, daughters Estelle and Pearl or Mrs 'Baggie' his housekeeper – if they were not around. Stead himself was specially remembered by Islanders (as recently as the 1970s I knew two ladies who could remember him) cycling everywhere on a three-wheeler, usually accompanied by cheerful children clinging to anything they could hold on to. Everyone who stayed at Holly Bush was expected to swim, getting their heads under water for a start.

The flavour of life at Holly Bush comes in a timetable or "Daily Routine" which he wrote for family and guests. Times were measured for example by a flag flown from the Holly Bush house which could be seen from the beach hut (the first on the Island) situated at the end of their long garden, now the site of houses on the east side of Bound Lane.

It runs:

Breakfast 8 a.m. Dinner 1 p.m. Tea 5 p.m. Supper 9 p.m.

Sunday: Bed drill 9.30 a.m. Chapel 11.00 a.m. Afternoon Read (? i.e. whatever) 2 p.m. Chapel 6.30 p.m. Evening singing 9.0 p.m.

1. Every day every person before dinner must have a fact to repeat from the day's paper.
2. Every day every person must write one entry as to what they did that day in the *H.B.G. (Holly Bush Gazette)*.
3. Every day one person in rotation must choose something to be read at prayers.
4. Every day This last injunction is unfinished. What happened? Was father dragged away, harangued away? Did he drop off to sleep? Did the Minister call? In those days it couldn't have been a phone call or something on the radio though he did have a land line at his London office. Incidentally all the children had cameras for everyone to photograph everyone else.

Let's see what else we can find in the journal.

SUNDAY BANK HOLIDAY (Aug 9th 1900)

Father got up at 4 and took LUCY (One of up to five boats they owned) round to the oyster beds, returned home, went to bed. (The oyster beds were probably on the extreme north-west of the Island, about four miles from the house.)

All at breakfast except mother.

Prayers.... Reading.... Pearl's reading Blake's *CHIMNEY SWEEPER*.

Went out in boats, all but mother. Having come round from front. Down to Cockle Bay. Bathed at Cockle Bay Point. (Possibly Sandy Point, two miles from house.)

Had dinner and said usual peace.

Tried to make Pilsey Island. Failed, tide, running aground. (Pilsey Island is at least six miles away by shoals, water, very fast tides.) Race out to sea. Could not reach front ... (mention of mud, running aground, fresh wind.) Transfer of guests and passengers from boat to houseboat and so on. Eventually guests walked home but Stead, one of the guests, and son Harry, walked through the water pushing the boat before us... anchored Daphne (boat) 'on coastguard's advice'. Hauled Lucy higher up. Carried things home. ARRIVED DEAD TIRED AND WENT TO BED. The distance travelled is estimated to be at least fifty miles by sea, land and mud bank.

Stead was aged fifty-one.

Fisher might have been Admiral 'Jack' Fisher who was one of Stead's evangelical friends. Stead was warned by the Hayling coastguard about dangerous behaviour in his boats but he replied: *I was not born to be drowned*. (Coming from the North-east he claimed he had Viking blood in his veins! When he tried to launch a boat off the beach he was knocked over. One of the girls described (laughingly?) how: *Father and boat rolled over and over in the waves*. Twelve years later he was drowned on the *Titanic* on the way to America to address a meeting on World Peace attended by the U.S. President. It is believed that if he had not died then he would have been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Does a Ghost Ship Haunt Hayling Bay?

Does a ghost ship haunt Hayling Bay? The idea comes from an article in *The Times* by their Weather Eye correspondent, Paul Simons. On March 22nd he wrote about the tragedy of H.M.S. *Eurydice*, which sank with the loss of 364 passengers and crew on March 22nd 1878. *Eurydice* was a 26 gun frigate returning from the West Indies. On board the crew included many young cadets in training and with them were wives and families of men returning

home from posts in British Empire territories in the Caribbean. Simons writes how the day started sunny but in the afternoon 'inky-black' clouds appeared to the north, over Hayling and the Downs. Ships in the area battened down for trouble and a wind suddenly blew up into a blinding snow storm. Unfortunately the crew aboard Eurydice might not have noticed this development as they approached from the south-west, behind the Isle of Wight. She was under full sail with the gun ports open. Turning the corner into Hayling Bay past Dunnose Head, near Ventnor, observers described how she disappeared in a flurry of snow. 45 minutes later, when the blizzard cleared, the ship was nowhere to be seen – lost with all hands, except two of the crew, who were picked up by a passing schooner

At the time the sinking, so sudden and on a well-defined channel, was a mystery but Simons explains that as the blizzard hit the ship her topsails must have filled with heavy, wet snow. The ship: *Became so top heavy that she keeled over. Seawater flooded in through the gun ports, and the frigate capsized.* It sank within minutes, leaving the 364 people aboard helpless.

Why the captain was so careless as he rounded Dunnose Head will always be a mystery. But it is likely there was a 'demob happy' mood on the part of everyone aboard as they saw the coast of England, in many cases for the first time for years. A sudden order to climb to the top of the masts to bring in the sails might not have been well received, despite the strict discipline in the navy of those days. But the crew or the officers didn't have much time to think when the snow enveloped the ship. In fact they may not have been able to see what they should have been doing. Simons comments: *It shows the terrifying power of a sudden snowstorm even in late March.*

Jon Rosamond, the *Portsmouth News* defence correspondent, writes that there have been several reported sightings of the fully-rigged sailing vessel moving at considerable speed before suddenly vanishing. In the 1930s a submarine is supposed to have taken evasive action to avoid colliding with the 'ghostly vessel'. On November 18th the tragedy may be marked by the 'biggest ever' hunt for a ghost ship in a bid to get in touch with the souls of all those who perished. An organisation calling itself Hunt Ghost wants to run a trip from Gunwharf Quays with a dozen professional psychics on board. They

plan to hold a seance, holding hands and reading out the names of those who died. They hope to get support from others and that the event will be televised as part of the BBC's Children in Need programmes. But naval sources aren't happy. They think the scheme is in poor taste, though the site of the sinking is not officially protected as a resting place of the sailors.

Success of North Hayling Gun Site

Bill Jones, who now lives in New Hampshire, U.S.A., is appealing for help to trace a plaque on Hayling commemorating a famous wartime event. When he was about eight or ten years old he remembers being in Portsmouth during the blitz. He vividly remembers standing beside an air-raid shelter when four German aircraft flying three miles high, amazing for those days, were over the city. Anti-aircraft guns opened fire and suddenly:

One of the planes became a bright yellow spot in the sky. Then it turned red, a puff of black smoke was seen and it fell. It seemed to take an hour to fall but it must have been falling very fast.

It was a remarkable, almost miraculous success for the gunners and the following day their achievement was reported on the front page of national newspapers. Bill's uncle, Bert Leason, was the C.O. of an experimental torpedo unit, based at Stokes Bay pier and he said that the plane had crashed on Hayling.

After the war Bill emigrated to the U.S.A. but came back to Britain on holiday in 1983. He was taken to Hayling where he remembers being shown a plaque, on shingle, near the sea with some huts nearby. It marked the site where the plane hit the ground. He wants to know whether any Islanders can identify the site and, especially, what date this event occurred because he is writing his memoirs for his family.

This incident did occur and another Islander, the late Councillor Peter Hedley, also witnessed it when he was a boy, in Havant at the time. But Peter's account differed in detail. He remembers the four planes, a photographic reconnaissance plane and three escorts, flying overhead. There were puffs of shells bursting near them, then one of them was hit. He also

described the plane falling slowly but from his vantage point it didn't fall in the direction of Hayling, more to the north-east towards West Sussex.

The guns that brought the plane down were the latest mark 3.7 inch calibre on the Northney gun site and A.T.S. girls stationed there at the time remembered the event. Can anyone still living on Hayling remember it too? Where was a commemorative plaque erected and what was the date of the incident?

The German air force, Luftwaffe, had similar bad luck when they tried a high altitude attack on the British in Egypt. After this they abandoned this tactic. Bill was actually living in Birmingham during the war but came to this district at least once a year for holidays. He has such happy memories of being part of a large, happy family. He remembers *being blasted to hell* by the blitz in Birmingham so the family decided to come down south for a rest. They arrived in Portsmouth and that night there was a huge air raid and the bombing went on to last two or three days.

Charlie Chaplin on Hayling

All except one of Charlie Chaplin's children came on holiday regularly to Hayling but Charlie and his wife, Oona, only came for short periods occasionally. They would stay at the Royal Hotel but the children stayed with their governess at the Westfield Oaks Hotel in Westfield Avenue, off Beach Road. This is the view of Margery Campbell who owned the hotel from 1947 until it was burned down in 1962 after a New Year's party. The site is now several blocks of flats.

Margery showed photos of the children in the 1950s playing on the beach and beside some beach huts. She also has a cutting from the *London Evening Standard* with a photo of Geraldine Chaplin, aged 12, and her sister six-year-old Josephine taken at London airport on their way home to Geneva after a holiday on Hayling. It quotes Geraldine as saying: *Hayling Island is nicer than Geneva*. Margery's daughter, Rebecca, struck up a big friendship with Vicky Chaplin and she has a copy of a letter in French to Rebecca from Vicky. Dated 13th August 1961 it was written on headed notepaper from the Chaplin home, Manoir de Ban, Corsier sur Vevey. She wrote that she longs for Vicky

and the horses, Goldy and Heather, which they used to ride at Roy Ware's stables in Sinah Warren.

Margery wrote:

Hayling Island in the 1950s was a seaside village.

The Chaplin family were introduced to Westfield Oaks in the early fifties by the Sharples family. They met in the South of France and the Sharples children came with their two nannies for many years. Some years later Sir Richard Sharples was murdered in the grounds of Government House in Berrnuda when he was Governor. (I believe the mystery of this crime was never solved or explained.)

We had many distinguished families stay at the hotel. Some of the children included all the grandchildren of Sir Alan Lascelles, secretary to two kings, Edward VIII and George VI, and the present queen, until his retirement. All the families came through recommendation – most having town houses and meeting in Kensington Gardens.

Excepting Michael, all the Chaplin children stayed with us during the 1950s: Geraldine, Josephine, Vicky, Eugene, Jane, Annette and Christopher. They were lively guests and often played tricks such as switching the male/female signs outside the toilets. We were fully booked the last time they came and they stayed at the Royal Hotel but came round to see us often and invited Rebecca to stay with them there. Many Islanders remember the Chaplins sitting relaxed outside the Royal.

When my husband (Mr Bone) died in 1960 the whole family were staying at the Savoy in London and they phoned and invited Rebecca up there. So she met Oona and Charlie. She thought Oona was beautiful. Charlie was very friendly to her and she had an autograph with his drawing of himself and 'Love to Rebecca' on it. Daughter Vicky was his favourite and it was said she could twist him round her little finger.

One day Vicky was missing. Fearing she had been abducted, everyone flew around looking for her – to no avail. Then she was discovered supervising a 'Roll a penny' game at the funfair.

But Margery is surprised that not more is made of *Angry Young Man* John Osborn's links with Hayling in those days. He used to run a repertory company here in the winter to perform at Victoria Hall, at the corner of Westfield Avenue and Beach Road. His two leading ladies used to stay at Westfield Oaks and he used to borrow the hotel furniture for the productions. *He never seemed to smile and he would sit in my kitchen waiting for them, drinking coffee and rarely speaking to anyone.*

This must have been the time when Osborne was planning his famous play of marital discord *Look Back in Anger* which won a competition when produced at the Royal Court Theatre in Sloan Square about 1956. The competition was designed to drive out smug drawing-room comedies then prevailing in British theatre, and it launched the 'kitchen sink' genre in the theatre and the 'angry young man' in post-war British society. Could these ideas have come when he was brooding in this Hayling kitchen?

I Was Machine-gunned to says Val

Casualties amongst civilians on Hayling, reported in last month's edition of the Hayling Islander, jogged many people's memories. They included the story of a young girl who was machine-gunned by an enemy plane as she cycled down Beach Road with a friend. This drew a response from Val Newland (née King) who described being machine-gunned in Fishery Lane. Val had been sheltering with her parents and baby sister, Audrey, in their family shelter in the garden. She went outside to wander as young girls do when to her horror an enemy plane appeared from behind a tree and opened fire. *I remember seeing the swastika*, says Val. She hastened back to the shelter and no harm came to her. In potentially one of the worst incidents a land mine wiped out the United Reformed Church (then Congregational) chapel in Mengham. The neighbouring hut used by the district nurse was also blown up. She lived in Havant and when she had a phone call about it she jumped on her bike and came in to see what she could do. She found smoke everywhere and the ruined hut being damped down by firemen. Soaked and strewn around were the records of all the Island's children. Included in these must have been Val's and Audrey's, both very much alive today!

Peter Tibble who also lived here described the terror of sheltering at night as the raiders flew overhead. His father was a renowned Mengham market gardener and greengrocer, whose family still run businesses in this line. He told Peter that he counted about eighty bombs and land mines falling in the area which is now the Health Centre, adjacent car park, United Reformed Church, and library. Many of these were incendiary bombs which actually landed in open country, gardens etc. so just burned up and were forgotten. Obviously the raiders were drawn over Hayling by the decoy lights but this particular area was the site of a search-light, situated behind where the library now stands. This actually took a direct hit by a bomb. There had been no warning of this attack and the crew were still under cover, getting their kit together so had a miraculous escape.... perhaps a rare case of being saved by NOT being prepared.

Last month's Islander carried a letter pointing out that places like Portsmouth suffered much greater civilian casualties than Hayling. My point is that in those places children were evacuated. I lived through the war in a small market town with a population much the same as Hayling (about 10,000) Like Hayling we heard enemy planes overhead at night and when the Americans entered the war we saw weeks of long convoys of war weapons, tanks, guns etc. pass through from the Atlantic ports, Milford Haven and so on. You'd have thought these would have been a target for enemy bombers but we had no casualties and only three bombs, all of them falling in the fields. (My father, who was in the Local Defence Volunteers - later the Home Guard - took me to see one of them.) This proves to me that Hayling was made a special case for 'treatment' by the enemy. In fact the bombs may have been dropped by the enemy to facilitate their escape from the RAF, perhaps to Ireland.

Notes on Nevil Shute on Hayling

Fifty members of the Nevil Shute Foundation visited Pond Head on Tuesday 24 June during a three day conference held at the Queen's Hotel, Southsea. Half came from the U.S.A. but the conference was organized from Australia. They went on to Exbury Gardens to visit the home of Lord Rothschild. Nevil

Shute went there to visit the financier with his friend, Barnes Wallis, famous for the 'bouncing bomb' and geodetic airship and aircraft designs. One of the incidents described in a novel was based on an event which actually took place there – a German bomber was shot down by a young WREN, the women's branch of the navy in those days.

Nevil Shute was the pen name of Nevil Shute Norway, author and aircraft engineer who lived on Hayling from 1940 to 1951. He moved here from 14 Helena Road, Southsea, because of the bombing. He probably lived on Hayling longer than anywhere else in his lifetime. In the early 1930s he founded Airspeed, the aircraft manufacturing company, originally in a derelict bus station in York, then it was moved to Southsea airfield. The original factory buildings still stand. Here they produced Horsa gliders and the Oxford trainer and experimented with flight refuelling and retractable undercarriages. Amongst many famous visitors were the pioneer aviators Amy Johnson (Mollison) recently featured on television and Sir Alan Cobham. Shute wrote over thirty novels, most famous being *A Town Like Alice* and *On the Beach*, which were made into successful films. *A Town Like Alice* was written when he lived at Hayling but it is likely that much of the actual writing was done when he stayed at the Oxford and Cambridge Club in London. Nevil Shute was a member of the Hayling Island Sailing club, where he kept a forty-foot yacht named Runagate. Older Islanders still remember him cutting his lawn at Pond Head, sitting up on a motor mower. In those days his favourite occupation was visiting the Regal cinema which stood only a few hundred yards away from Pond Head, opposite the Rose in June public house, today a car park. One report is that he left Hayling after a prodigious row with the Sailing club. Lady Mackworth described how she went sailing with a gentleman who was taken ill. Hastily they sailed back to the club and tied up at the first buoy they came upon. Unfortunately Nevil Shute arrived to find someone had borrowed his mooring and stormed up to the commandant of the day. Lady Mackworth reported hearing terrible language and the next thing she knew Shute had left the club and the country!

Nevil Shute died aged 61 in 1960 of a stroke, in a remote country home near Melbourne, Australia. He was writing a new novel about the second coming of Christ in Australia. His wife was a qualified doctor but didn't practise on

Hayling. His two daughters, Heather and Shirley, went to school on Hayling, which was situated in the buildings now Bay View Court and they were Girl Guides here. They emigrated with their father to Australia and both now live in the U.S.A. Heather who lives in Oregon, wished to attend the conference and revisit Hayling but was prevented by her husband's ill-health.

A Unique Glimpse of Hayling's Past

Soldier with no Known Grave Found Peace at St Mary's

Elizabeth Torrington was brought up an orphan in Taunton Union Workhouse, and went on to work as a cook in the army barracks in Kensington. So how did she end up as the wife of a doctor, one of the richest men on Hayling and living in Norfolk House, one of the finest houses in Hayling at the time? The answer comes from new research by professional archivist Dr Tony Wakeford entitled *The How Family of Norfolk House*. It features the distinguished elevations of Beachland's; The Crescent, now recognised as between numbers 49 and 53 The Seafront. The study is intended as a fond remembrance of Tony's forebears who lived there, witnessing 'their many joys and tragedies.' It also reveals that all our ancestors had far more interesting lives than we might imagine.

Dr Wakeford's story starts with the sale of Norfolk House, including four acres of land, by the executors of Hayling's deceased Lord of the Manor, William Padwick, in 1870. It was bought for £1,400 by Sophia Budd, a wealthy widow from Bedfont in Middlesex. Her husband, Henry, had been a magistrate and deputy lieutenant for Hampshire. His grandfather, also Henry, had been the principal farmer on Hayling in the 1700s. The property Sophia bought included land 50 feet wide and 113 feet long north of the building, comprising garden, vaults, paths and passages. To the south and in line with the building the land extended 344 feet which was the space originally intended for The Crescent if it had been finished. Southwards it extended to the high water mark. The land included the classically built library and reading room building. This later became Green's Café, situated where today is the flattened car park west of Beachlands Amusement Arcade.

In 1836 Henrietta, Sophia's younger sister, had an illegitimate son by George Giles How of Hammersmith. Childless Sophia adopted the boy, named George Henry How, and lavished all her attention on him. Unlucky Henrietta married in Chelsea seven years later but she died in childbirth. Young George How was sent to America to study medicine and returned to a busy practice in Taunton and Kings College Hospital London. He goes down in history as the man who gave the name Beachlands to that part of the seafront Common. When his first wife died he took an extraordinary step, falling for Elizabeth Torrington. It meant a huge and unexpected not to say luxurious and passionate change in her life. She and George had three children in quick succession, dividing their life between Hayling and Taunton. Then, in 1894 they came to live permanently in Norfolk House. For them Hayling life was very good. An inventory showed there were seven bedrooms, rooms for housekeeper and butler, a well-stocked wine cellar, stables for horses and carriages, etc. Household features included a Spode dinner service and an eighteenth century French chair with mother-of-pearl decoration.

The children were Harold, Alec and Ethel. A fourth, Hilda came a few years later. From this starting point on Hayling, their stories could hardly have been more varied. Harold seemed intended for the church, became a server and member of the Boys' Brigade but in 1910 he died suddenly of septicaemia, in Taunton. He is buried in the family vault at St Mary's Church, Hayling. Alec sought a life at sea. He sailed the Atlantic on the SS *Teakwood* carrying oil and molasses from Cuba and America to Britain. In 1915 he joined the SS *Oakwood* which was torpedoed off the coast of Ireland but the crew were saved. Later that year he joined the Somerset Light Infantry, and was posted to the Machine Gun Corps. He fought in many battles but was killed in 1918 on a day in which 9,000 allied soldiers died and have no known graves. To be torpedoed at sea then killed in a desperate land battle was not an enviable fate. His mother set up an oak gradine in his memory at St Mary's in 1919. In 1914 sister Ethel married retired Chief Petty Officer Robert Henry Wakeford. They had a daughter but he was recalled to the navy and the marriage fell apart. She later had a relationship with Frederick Jeffcut, a Company Sergeant Major with the Machine Gun Corps and they had a son, Frederick Wakeford, in 1925. In 1918 sister Hilda married Charles

Etheridge of the Australian Imperial Army. When the war ended they went back to Australia where she died in 1975 having had five children. They returned to Norfolk House, only once, in the 1920s.

In the meantime Dr Howe died aged 80 in 1916. Wife Elizabeth sold Norfolk House for £1,100 to Helen Edith Camp. This estate was virtually the same as what Sophia had bought for £1,100 in 1870, i.e. minus the Green Cafe property building which had been sold to Mrs Green. She went to live at Hazeley House, Hollow Lane. She died there in 1950 aged 75. Her daughter Ethel died there in 1976.

The Times Features the Crescent

In its June 23rd edition *The Times'* John Bungey lavished praise on The Crescent. His feature *The Great British Weekend* wrote of King Canute's 'second home' association with Bosham then he turned to Hayling:

With its muddle of flat blocks, trinket shops and chalets lining the long shingle beach Hayling Island won't be vying with Tuscany for the holidaying chatterati. But the place has pockets of quaint charm amid the architectural anarchy small islands seem to inspire. My favourite old building is the splendid 1825 crescent of houses which sits incongruously on the front. Norfolk Crescent was constructed by a developer hoping to create 'Utopia by the sea' but the scheme foundered because at the time the island was only connected by a causeway and London society (unlike Canute) was not going to get its feet wet.

Bungey goes on to write about *another thwarted Hayling dream* a business to extract gold from the sea, abandoned *because it would take decades to extract a worthwhile amount*. He recommended walking on Hayling, citing Northney with its 12th-century church, and is full of praise for the Hayling Billy coastal path.

Billed as muddy but magical it was in fact not very muddy and rather magical as gulls swooped between blue sky and pea-green sea. Buttercups and dog roses lined the route....

He ends with praise for Fishbourne Palace and its mosaics, covering an area greater than Buckingham Palace. *The Victorians may not have created their Utopia at Hayling but up the road a canny Roman potentate got close...*

Mafeking Night in Mengham

The famous excitements of Mafeking night on 16th May 1900 were initiated by the relief of Mafeking in the Boer war. 1,500 British troops under the command of Colonel Robert Baden-Powell were besieged by 7,500 Boers, surprisingly well-armed with weapons from Germany and France. When the siege was broken there were wild, patriotic demonstrations everywhere in Britain but pacifists who opposed the war were attacked. One was the first and only Labour MP of the time who stood outside his London home all night with a cricket bat to deter hostility. W. T. Stead's home in Wimbledon, opposite the All England Tennis Club, was stoned. Even on Hayling, population then only 1,612, the editor and social reformer's holiday home, Holly Bush House in Selsmore Road, came under attack. This is an account by his housekeeper, Mrs Bragg, who lived there with her disadvantaged daughter. She wrote this for the *Holly Bush Gazette*, the family's own 'paper' to which everyone was expected to contribute.

I shall never forget that night. Hayling has always seemed such a quiet place, it never entered my head that anyone could do any harm but at quarter past ten some queer music was playing outside. Then shouting, singing and an eerie noise. I felt very frightened. Glass came shattering through and I had only one light burning, no one in the house but myself and the sleeping little one. Could human beings be so cruel. My heart beat fast, my back felt like breaking. I had just left off work and was cracking a few nuts to eat just before going to rest when all this happened. It lasted about five minutes. As soon as the sounds died away I put the light in the middle kitchen and went out, carefully shutting doors. I thought I would go to some of the neighbours which took about two minutes. Mrs Cooper; came back with me and we surveyed the outside of the house and premises. I carefully took a box of matches with me, it was a dark night

We came along the road and struck a match as we got to the gate when we found it was broken in pieces and laid across the pathway. Next we found the glass in the kitchen door broken by small stones, about ten holes. Nothing more was done that I knew of, so we walked about till quarter to twelve. I trembled with fear, thinking something else might happen. I had no sleep till four o'clock Sunday morning and then not very much.

I got up and went to chapel and told some of the people what had been done. They were very much astonished. I came home and watched from a window to see who might come. When my little one came home from Sunday school someone had told her the houseboat had been smashed so we locked up the house and went to see it. There stood looking were two gentlemen. I asked if they knew anything about it. They said they had heard that Mr Stead's house had been visited by a mob and also that they had taken the garden roller and put it in the fish ponds. (This was news to me I did not know they had taken it.) The houseboat was a complete wreck, every frame of glass was smashed and what they could put into the sea they did.

In the evening I went to chapel and asked Mr Bone to let the police know how I was circumstanced. Sunday night I watched vigorously till 12 then went to bed still fearing something might happen. On Monday I had two policemen and the Inspector of Police from Havant to question me three times on that day, twice on Tuesday and on Wednesday they found the garden roller and two of them dragged it home. They had also found out who had done it all and wanted to know if I thought Mr Stead would prosecute. I thought it most likely that Mr Stead would forgive the whole affair. So I heard nothing more till Whit Monday when Mr Stead came down and sent me to invite as many as I could find to supper and a smoke and also to talk about the affair.

So off I started to find those who declared they never did it. Three of them whose names the police had given me came to see Mr Stead and stayed to supper. I heard that one of them gave himself away by saying they had had a drop too much and by the way two of them were signed teetotals. And

now the gates are new and the glass mended all thanks to Mr Stead for his forgiving heart and of whom some of the people say he lived the Gospel. A.B.

(This was written in very neat handwriting with no spelling mistakes! VPJ.)

The practice of Skimmity Rides, singing and playing rowdy music outside the homes of unpopular people, e.g. adulterers, was practised on Hayling and widely in the west country

W. T. Stead and Hayling

W. T. STEAD (1849-1912) was brought up in Howden near Newcastle on Tyne, where his father was Minister of the Congregational Church. He was drawn to journalism and became junior reporter, then editor at the Northern Echo, in Darlington, where they still preserve his editor's chair. In 1876 his first major success was reporting the Bulgarian Atrocities, where the Turks brutally put down a revolt in what was in those days a territory in the Ottoman Empire, killing 15,000 people. His writing was so vitriolic and successful that it came to the attention of the Prime Minister of the day, W. E. Gladstone. In 1883 Stead was offered a position with the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the forerunner of today's *London Evening Standard*.

Up to then journalism was a sober occupation associated with reserved gentlemen working from offices in dark suits. Stead changed all that to the 'New journalism' which resembled the style of working we recognise today in the press, radio and television. In particular there were eye-catching headlines, on the spot journalism and press campaigns, urging people to support good causes. He became a familiar figure with his yellowish brown, shabby suit and a sealskin hat which *gave him the appearance of a dog stealer*.

His first exciting campaign was the *Gordon Must Go* issue. This was instigated in 1883 when a Muslim leader, the 'Mad Mahdi of the Sudan', threatened western interests in Egypt. In Stead's eyes the only man who had the courage and determination to oppose the Mahdi was the formidable General 'Chinese' Gordon who had come to prominence leading western forces to resist an uprising against what was in those days a critically weak Chinese Empire. So

he was drafted to take a stand against the Mahdi in Khartoum with minimal support. Unfortunately Gordon was killed in this effort.

But Stead's most memorable campaign came in 1885 with the *Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon* a forthright attempt to end child prostitution. This ended with an Act of Parliament to raise the age of consent for girls to 16. Incidentally the Act also made sex between males illegal.

One early campaign concerned the decline in the Royal Navy. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, with the great victory of Trafalgar, the navy was supreme but as the century proceeded 'wooden walls, timber and sail warships, gave way to iron hulls, steam engines replaced sails and long-range breech loading guns took the place of muzzle loading cannons there was a desperate need to modernise fast, against French and German rivalry.

Stead struck up a friendship with Admiral Jack Fisher, the two men shared strong evangelical Christian views and they worked together on a campaign headlined *The Truth about the Navy*. This involved Stead visiting Fisher at Portsmouth Harbour which meant many a train journey via Havant. He noticed the siding in Havant station where a branch line ran to Hayling Island. Since this was on the line from his London home in Wimbledon it occurred to him this was an ideal place to buy a holiday home for his family of three boys and two girls. In 1895 he converted two small neighbouring cottages into a two-gabled detached house he named Holly Bush House, with two gardens and with an unrestricted field leading to the beach, about three hundred metres to the south. It was staffed by formidable Mrs Bragg who had a disadvantaged daughter. It was the location to take up his favourite forms of relaxation: swimming and sailing. (Ironically he told Hayling Coastguards who warned him about the dangers of his reckless sailing that he *was not born to be drowned*.) Here he built a beach hut, the first on the Island where there have been probably thousands since. (Incidentally not entirely good news for it blew down in a sudden storm and a holiday visitor from London was killed.) Being a convinced feminist who encouraged women to go into journalism and editing, he invited ladies cycle to Holly Bush House and camp in his garden for free. Guests at Holly Bush were expected to contribute to a journal the *Holly Bush Gazette* and intriguing

snapshots of life in those days are recorded. One fine example is an account of Havant Sports Day in about 1900. The men were expected to compete, e.g. in cycle races, with as much sweat and muscle as possible. The ladies were more refined. THE FLORAL BICYCLE PARADE went thus:

The first young lady appeared to be sitting on a box formed of golden corn and scarlet flowers, she herself being dressed in white, with a straw hat tied gipsy-fashion under her chin, trimmed with corn and scarlet flowers to match. One pretty girl had her machine decorated with maiden hair fern and delicate white flowers, When mounted she seemed to be seated on a Welsh harp.... a rather remarkable bicycle was in mauve, the machine bound in ribbons of the colour and an arch above it of mauve asters, the rider having asters in her hair and in her shoes...

Stead's impact on Island life was, as would be expected, very positive. In particular he led the Island's celebrations of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee by organizing the planting of a tree for each year of her reign. Although he was a convinced Spiritualist for much of his life he almost certainly never practised this at his holiday home though almost certainly he took up an invitation to hold séances and spirit photography at a neighbouring house where his visits 'lasted for hours'. His other great enthusiasm was for cheap books available for children: *Books for the bairns*, the first paper-back-revolution.

But principally though he had his holiday home on Hayling he spent much time travelling abroad in pursuit of his dream of world peace. He was instrumental in setting up the International Court of Justice in The Hague, marked today by a plaque there. Amazingly another major contribution was the rapport he established with Russian Czars, who received him as an honoured guest in the Winter Palace at St Petersburg.

In 1912 Stead was invited to the United States to address a meeting on world peace attended by the President of the U.S.A. He died on the *Titanic* on his way there.

Brilliant Diplomat who died on the Titanic

A MONUMENT in New York's Central Park pays tribute to one of Hayling Island's most famous residents, who perished in the *Titanic* disaster.

Had William Stead survived, many believe his diplomatic skills could have averted World War One.

The social reformer and journalist hit the international headlines in 1885 after he and General Bramwell Booth of the Salvation Army demonstrated girls as young as 13 could be bought on the streets of London.

Stead was jailed for three months for his part in the plot to expose London's white slave traffic, but carried on his campaigning work on the *Pall Mall Gazette* while in his prison cell.

As a result of the case he won his fight to get the age of consent raised to 16. In 1895 Stead and his family bought Holly Bush House, which still stands in Selmore Road, Hayling, near the former Rose in June public house.

There he, his wife and family entertained friends, played host to convalescents from all walks of life and helped popularise Chichester Harbour as a recreational sailing centre. Stead even joined the local lifeboat crew.

Through his constant fight for social justice, Stead made many important friends throughout the world, including Cecil Rhodes, General Gordon and Czar Alexander III of Russia.

Many people believed his influence on world leaders would ensure continued peace in the world and he was much sought after to address meetings and talk to influential leaders.

Stead was travelling to join US President Taft, to address a gathering of distinguished men and religious leaders in Carnegie Hall, when he stepped aboard the *Titanic* on April 10, 1912. He was last seen with Taft's military aide, Major Archibald Butt, helping women and children on to the last of the lifeboats.

His New York monument was erected soon after his death. His friends in Britain put up their own memorial on a granite plinth, beside the Thames and within sight of parliament. It says:

This memorial to a journalist of wide renown was erected near the spot where he worked for more than 30 years, by journalists of many lands in recognition of his brilliant gifts, fervent spirit and untiring devotion to the service of his fellow men.

Underneath it are written the two words which his admirers believe sum up this man of courage and charisma – Fortitude and Sympathy.

Simon Gray

Letters written to me by the late Simon Gray have just been discovered. The author of thirty plays and many novels was born on Hayling in 1936 and died in August 6th this year. The October edition of the *Hayling Islander* included his obituary, describing him as Hayling's answer to Dylan Thomas. In the letters, written from Simon's home in Addison Avenue, London W12, in May 2001, the author wrote:

I have extremely fond memories of Hayling Island. I was born there, evacuated to Canada during the war and returned there for several years before my family moved to London – and yes, my father was a doctor. He practised on Hayling Island while qualifying to become a pathologist.

*We used to come back there fairly regularly during summers as my mother had several relatives and old family friends there – Helen Beddington, Sheila Ridout, Stella Fitzroy – all of them, of course, long dead. My last play but one, *The Late Middle Classes*, was in fact partly inspired by Hayling Island, although in the play it is merely referred to as the island.*

Whenever I am in the neighbourhood, i.e. Chichester, I try to get over for the day. The last time I was upset to discover that one of the houses I lived in on Ferry Road had been demolished. (This was the Mallards demolished to make way for a development of new houses.) I don't know whether the house in which I was born is still there as I have trouble remembering the address.

(Islanders believe it was in Beach Road, opposite the entrance to St Mary's Road.)

In another letter (dated June 2001) Simon confirms some of the details included in his Hayling Islander obituary, such as the name of the family home in Ferry Road. He wrote: "My memory is slightly bruised by being told that the name of the house was The Mallards – of course it was – but I've always remembered it as Mallows. I recall it physically very well, the back giving on to a garden which then gave on to a marsh on which I believe one of the two new houses now stands. I actually described it and wrote about Hayling Island in a novel of thirty years ago called Little Portia. Perhaps I called the house Mallows in the novel and it took over as the reality."

He confirmed that Beach Road was the address where he was born and added that:

Dr May figured in our life in some way or another – I recall my mother's voice dwelling on his name. One of my strongest memories is being picked up every morning by a bus containing American soldiers – they might have been connected to the Air Force – and dropped off at school, an all a girls school which took in (because of the war etc.) a number of boys.

He remembered the Pook brothers, 'possibly even twins', who came to his birthday party, memorable because someone was violently sick and father, Dr Gray, *had to hold his head to control the direction of his vomit.*

Simon added:

I'd love to see the (Station) Theatre and think it would be a very nice idea to come down to Hayling this summer. Should I drop a note before doing so?

In fact he never did. Possibly he was overwhelmed by a busy life style. The letters were written on returning from trips to New York, then Suffolk. He apologised twice for being late in replying to letters.

Simon Gray's association with Hayling was confirmed in a BBC television feature about his work by Alan Yentob, which was repeated in a tribute after he died. He describes swimming on a Hayling beach and realising that he was

out of his depth and had gone out too far. Fortunately his father, watching from the beach, realised this and swam out to rescue him.

Hayling's Distant Past Revealed on the Beach

A coarse, metal artefact found on Hayling beach, opposite the Lifeboat public house, could be the latest piece of a jigsaw revealing events on Hayling nearly three thousand years ago. The item is about 28cms long, 9cms at its broadest, slightly curved and carefully shaped, might be from the prow of a Viking or even more ancient vessel. The metal seems to be very crudely smelted pig iron. One expert suggests it might be a natural object such as seaweed or driftwood impregnated by iron pyrites, which is abundant in this district. But the object seems to be designed to have a useful purpose, such as at the prow of a long boat, binding the timber from the two sides of a boat's hull, with a hole to allow for a mooring rope. The tough metal would have helped withstand the wear and tear of a seagoing boat, perhaps fortified for warfare – for ramming, maybe. A circular feature just visible on one side of the artefact seems to be a heavily eroded emblem.

The location of the find is where, about sixty years ago, two ancient coins were discovered by two brothers going home after a drink at the pub. The coins were slightly larger than a modern 50p piece, made of coarse gold. The first was a coin of Agathocles, an energetic Sicilian ruler of about the year 317 BC. (He actually lived till he was 72, great for those days.) The second was a coin of Ptolemy I, ruler of Egypt at the same time. Both men were ethnically Greek and for a while were allies. The interesting thing is that both were active in promoting trade west of the Mediterranean. (Ptolemy famously built the Pharos lighthouse of Alexandria, one of the Wonders of the Ancient World.)

The motivation was the search for metals, particularly Cornish tin and Welsh copper which were the ingredients of bronze, the alloy from which their tools and weapons were made. So the newly discovered artefact could possibly have been from a vessel in one of their merchant fleets. Even more likely it was from one of the scores of rival Phoenician vessels from the cities of Tyre and Sidon in the Eastern Mediterranean. They came here in great numbers

also in search of metal for making bronze. The Phoenicians were not interested in territorial gain, only earning profits. Because they were so far from their home in the Eastern Mediterranean they must have needed a base in Britain and archaeologists have looked for this for ages. The Phoenicians favoured an island location for their bases because they could fortify them and fan out in all directions to search of trade. So Hayling Island would have been ideal for them. In those far off days the entrance to Chichester Harbour was much smaller than it is today and there were supplementary channels to get into the Harbour further west down Beachlands, along the lines of today's Rails, Bound or Webb Lane. It is possible that these mariners didn't need to go any further for the tin ore. The Cornish coast is dangerous, to be avoided by ancient sailing boats but the tin was turned into ingots, known as astralgi, 'knuckles'. They were very light and could easily be carried in bundles by slaves, to Hayling's safe, natural harbours then on to the Mediterranean by boat.

So maybe three thousand years ago exhausted Phoenician or Greek sailors aimed for these points to find peace and safety in Chichester Harbour. One day, a storm drove one of their boats ashore and we have a remnant of the vessel plus the coins of one of the crew, as evidence of an intriguing past. The latest find seems to confirm that the two coins are genuine archaeological finds throwing light on Hayling's ancient history. But an expert in the British Museum was rather dismissive. He suggested they could have been souvenirs brought home from Egypt after the Second World War by British Eighth Army veterans. Some of these have been discovered in places with no likely link to the Eastern Mediterranean three thousand years ago. The Hayling finds are different because of the history of our Island. These are not the only ancient coins originating in the Mediterranean found on Hayling beach. About fifteen years ago a young lady, sunbathing near the funfair, described how she stretched out her hand and found a coin which was identified as a gold coin of the Roman Emperor Vespasian. A plastic bag full of coins collected on the beach over many years by a seventy year old man included coins from as far back as the Atrebates tribe who lived here before the Romans came. They were the first coins ever minted in Britain. He gave them away to a local boy when he left the Island.

Hayling Bay and the neighbouring Solent abound in shipwrecks. Typical is a navy wreck which lies about three miles off Hayling beach. It is a major national heritage site but is unattractive to dive on because of the sewage outfall nearby. This ship went down on the way to fight against the French in North America in the 1750s. It was a rather comic disaster which claimed few lives, if any. The ship had dropped anchor in soft mud or sand but the heavy metal had sunk so deeply that it became enormously difficult to raise. After big efforts it came up; with a jerk and holed the ship below the water line, sending it to the sea bed. It remains to this day like the Mary Rose, a time capsule of its day and age with valuable contents. Other ships down there include a captured U-boat which sank on its way from Portsmouth Harbour to the breaker's yard. Wrecks such as these are very good habitat for lobsters.



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