

Social History Research Report, Community Archaeology Project for Golden Hill Country Park, Freshwater, Isle of Wight. Volume 1

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Social History Research Report, **Community Heritage Project for Golden Hill Country Park,** **Freshwater, Isle of Wight**

Introduction

As part of the National Lottery Heritage funded Golden Hill Country Park project, Gift to Nature commissioned two community heritage reports from Dr Ruth Waller of Past Wight Heritage Consultancy. The results of the archaeological investigations into the surviving military structures within Golden Hill Park are described in a separate report.

This report details the results of the researches of the local volunteers who took part in the community heritage research project to find out about the people associated with Golden Hill Fort and Golden Hill County Park.

The Project team carried out as much research as they were able to during the Covid-19 pandemic and various lockdowns when we were unable to meet and also unable to visit some repositories of data such as the National Archives and local County Records Office. We were also unable to record as many memories of local people as we had planned.



Some of the Golden Hill Heritage project volunteers at one of the few meetings we were able to hold before the Covid-19 pandemic

Aims of the project

The two main aims of the Social History research carried out by the volunteers on this project were:

- to identify any soldiers and civilians associated with Golden Hill Fort and Country Park from its creation to present day;
- to record as much information as can be gathered from the available sources as possible to be able to tell the stories of some of those identified above.

The available sources for the volunteer's research were severely constrained by the Covid 19 pandemic. Those which could be accessed are listed below:

- Biographical evidence of individuals;
- Archaeological records held at the IW County HER database;
- Photographs, plans and archive material held at National Archives;
- Maps, plans and archive material held at IW County Archives;
- Oral history and memories of local residents;

- Freshwater and Totland Archive Group;
- Freshwater Parish Council Archives;
- Census data
- On-line Family History archives;
- Isle of Wight County Press Archive;
- National Newspaper Archive;
- Local residents' memories and photographs

Volunteers accessed and recorded as much information from the above sources just before and during the Covid Pandemic, therefore some of the data from some sources was not able to be gathered. Individual volunteers put in a huge amount of research time gathering all of the data from the above sources. After that, some volunteers wrote papers on their findings and others provided data and information which have been put together by Dr Ruth Waller.

In particular, Richard Matthews has transcribed the details of the 1,683 soldiers and civilians associated with Golden Hill Fort from the 1861 to 1911 censuses, 368 baptisms as well as producing written details of the lives and careers of all of the Officers mentioned at Golden Hill in the 1861 to 1911 censuses (all included in appendices in volume 2 of this report). This is a huge amount of data, which has not been able to be analysed because of the Covid -19 pandemic, but which is an amazing achievement and should provide a fascinating source for anyone wanting to learn about the people associated with Golden Hill.

Abbreviations:

AA – Anti-aircraft
AONB – Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
AWOL – Absence without Leave from the military duty assigned to a soldier
Adj – Adjutant (a military officer who acts as an administrative assistant to a senior officer)
Batt - Battalion
Bombr – Bombardier (a rank of non-commissioned officer equivalent to Corporal)
Capt - Captain
Col – Colonel
CQMS – Company Quartermaster Sergeant
DCLI – Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry
DO – Duty Officer
GH – Golden Hill
GHCP – Golden Hill Country Park
GHF – Golden Hill Fort
Gr – Grenadier (a soldier who carries and throws grenades)
IW – Isle of Wight
IWCP – Isle of Wight County Press
IWCRO – Isle of Wight County Records Office
Lieut – Lieutenant
NAAFI - The Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes was a company created by the British government in 1920 to run recreational establishments and to sell goods to servicemen and their families.
MC – Master of Ceremonies
NCO – Non-commissioned Officer
Qm – Quartermaster
Qms – Quartermaster Sergeant
RA – Royal Artillery
RAMC – Royal Army Medical Corps
RASC – Royal Army Service Corps
RDC – the Isle of Wight Rural District Council
RE – Royal Engineers

RGA – Royal Garrison Artillery
 RUR – Royal Ulster Rifles
 Sgt – Sergeant
 SM – Sergeant Major
 T or TA – Territorials
 WRAF – Women's Royal Airforce
 WTC – Water Training Company
 WW 1 – World War 1
 WW 2 – World War 2
 YMCA – Young Men's Christian Association which provided recreational facilities run by volunteers for the soldiers in both world wars.

BACKGROUND

Golden Hill Country Park was opened in 1970 and the 20ha site lies around the Palmerston Fort building. The Fort is a local landmark which is in a very prominent position built to overlook and defend the access to Freshwater Isle over the River Yar. When the site was sold by the Military in the 1960's, the land around it was bought by the Isle of Wight Council. Freshwater and Totland Parish Council's and local community groups created the County Park for the enjoyment of the local community. The Park is now managed by Gift to Nature, an Island environmental charity which is operated by Natural Enterprise. The location of the Park is shown in Figure 1 below:

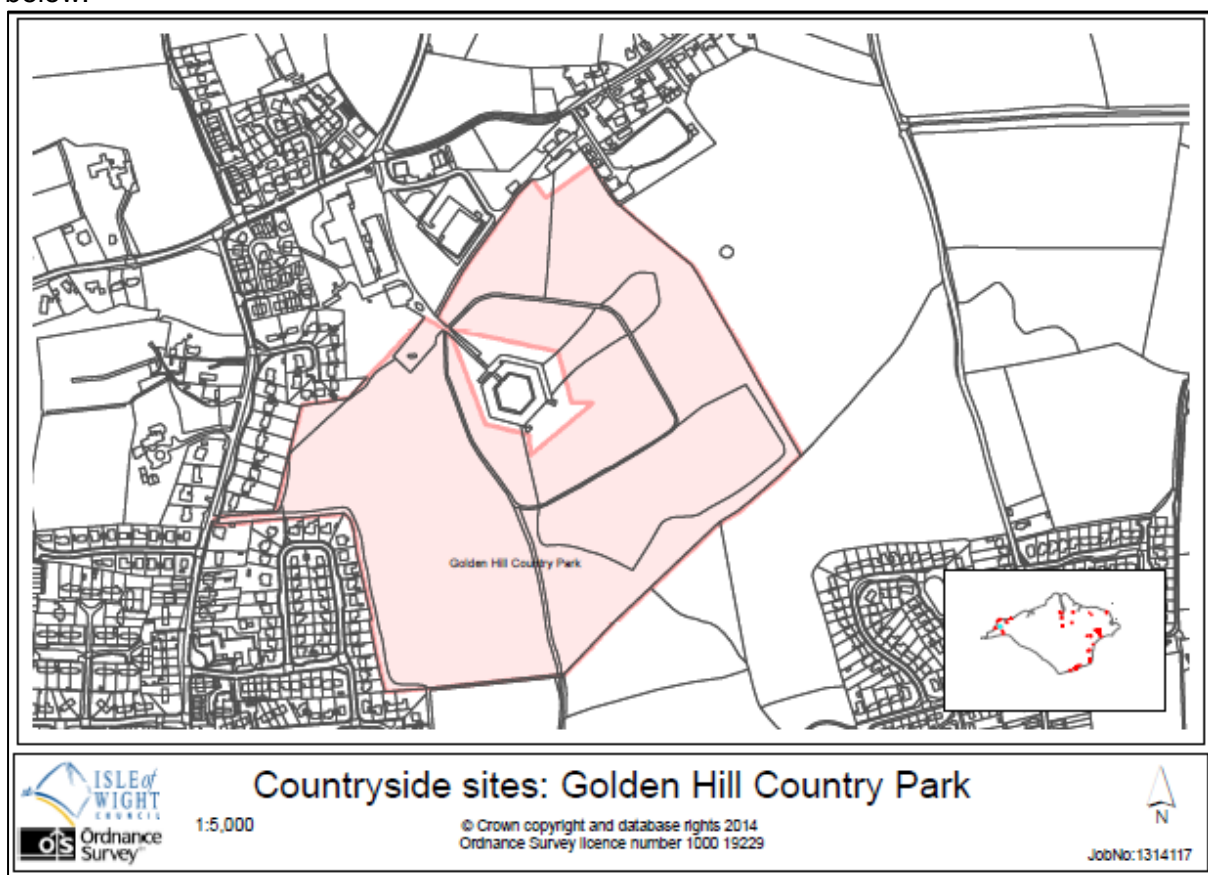


Figure 1: Location plan of the site

The early history of Freshwater Parish shows an agricultural community made up of small hamlets and farms (Margham, 1994), but the 19th Century was a period of great change in this area of the Isle of Wight. Freshwater Isle had played an important strategic role in the defence of the western entrance to the Solent since the Medieval period when a system of beacons was in place to warn of invasions.

The first fort built within Freshwater Parish was Worsley's Tower at Round Tower Point in 1525 and Shrapnode Blockhouse was built in 1547 at Sconce Point. Nearby stone forts were also built in Yarmouth and Hurst in the 1540's. These were intended to protect the entrance to Portsmouth Harbour which housed the Tudor fleet.

Two large brick-built forts were constructed at Fort Victoria and Fort Albert in the 1850's along with Freshwater Redoubt which was built in 1855.

By 1859 the French had constructed an iron clad war ship and there was a French invasion scare that year which resulted in the Royal Commission on the Defences of Britain in 1860. The Commission considered that the defences in the West Wight were inadequate and there was a complete reorganisation of the coastal defences.

Golden Hill Fort History

by Frances Cook

The Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) ended with the defeat of the French and their allies by a series of European coalitions led and financed by the United Kingdom. Napoleon was exiled to St. Helena in December of 1815 where he died on the 5th of May 1821. Despite this victory, the British still regarded the French as a serious threat to the security of the United Kingdom (Cantwell, 1985).

The Royal Commission on the Defence of the United Kingdom (1859), reporting in 1860, was given the task of looking at the 'state and efficiency of British land-based fortifications against naval attacks.' The areas of specific consideration included Portsmouth, Spithead and the Isle of Wight. The report recommended the building of a number of forts around the coast of the United Kingdom (Porter, 1977). Lord Palmerston, who was Prime Minister at the time was instrumental in setting up the Royal Commission and pushing through the recommendations. For this reason, they became known as 'Palmerston Forts'. The forts also acquired the name of 'Palmerston Follies', largely due to the fact that the first ones built in Portsmouth had their weapons trained inland to provide protection from a land-based attack. They were wrongly thought to have been built back to front as the main purpose was believed to be protection of The Solent, Southampton and Portsmouth from a seaborne French attack. (Victorian Forts and Artillery). Another theory suggests the name was given as the forts were 'costly ornamental buildings with no practical value' (Oxford Dictionary). Later the term came to refer to all Victorian forts, however not all the forts were Palmerston Forts and were not merely ornamental follies (Victorian Forts and Artillery). By 1890 the forts around the coastline of the United Kingdom had cost a total of £12,154,416 with another £5,484,810 to arm them. The proposed cost had been £11,000,000 which had risen to £17,000,000 by 1890 and the forts were yet to be completed. (Victorian Forts and Artillery).

Eight defence sites on the Western end of the Isle of Wight were built between 1852 and 1865, Fort Victoria (1852); Fort Albert (1854); Freshwater Redoubt (1855); The Needles Batteries (1861); Warden Point Battery (1862); Cliff End Battery (1862); Golden Hill Fort (1863) and Hatherwood Battery (1865). Concerns over the firing of such large guns causing the cliff at the Needles battery to crumble led to the building of the New Needles Battery in 1893. These and a further nine sites built on the Eastern end of the island and four forts built in the Solent formed part of the Portsmouth defences.

Golden Hill Fort was built on the high ground at Hill Farm in Freshwater between 1863 and 1868, its purpose was to defend the River Yar and provide accommodation for soldiers serving in the local batteries of the West Wight. The cost of building the fort was £38,000 (Cantwell 1985). Various theories have been put forward as to why it was called Golden Hill including

one mentioned by Kokeritz, in the Royal Surveys it is recorded as “Gaulddoune” (1299), “Gauldone” (1440) and “Galdon common” and “Galdon meade” (1608) (Kokeritz, 1940).

Notices for tenders for War Department contracts for the preparation work for Golden Hill Fort were published in The Hampshire Telegraph. The work included erecting fencing along part of the boundary of War Department land at the fort (Issue dated 12th September 1863) and ‘grubbing and clearing roots, stool moors etc. from land known as Golden Hill Plantation’ the tender stated that ‘the roots etc. grubbed up becoming the property of the contractor’ (Issue dated 24th October 1863). Grubbing is digging up ground or soil to clear away roots, stumps and vegetation (Collins English Dictionary). The tenders were to be sent to the Royal Engineers Office based at Hill Lodge, Freshwater under the direction of Colonel Bouchier.

The plans for the fort were signed off by William Francis Drummond Jervois. Jervois was born in Cowes, Isle of Wight in 1821, he was commissioned into the Royal Engineers in March of 1839 and trained at the School of Military Engineering in Chatham, Kent, leaving in 1841. He saw action in South Africa and later was responsible for overseeing the building of fortifications in Alderney (Watson, 1977). After his request to be posted to the Crimea was refused, he became the Commanding Royal Engineer (Major) for the London district in 1855 (Crick, 2012). In 1856 he became Assistant Inspector-General of Fortifications. Jervois was appointed Secretary of the Royal Commission in 1859 (Porter, 1977) and following the publishing of the Commission’s report, he supervised the design of the Palmerston Forts (Watson, 1954).

An article in The Hampshire Independent newspaper dated 7th November 1863 reported that work had started on the new redoubt to be built on the top of Golden Hill. The successful contractors were Messrs George Smith and Co, of Pimlico, London. Messrs George Smith and Co built the forts at the Needles Point and Warden Point and were described in the article as ‘the eminent Government Contractors of Pimlico’. The Hampshire Advertiser County Newspaper reported in November 1863 that ‘a great number of men’ were ‘employed in digging out the soil and levelling the ground’. The report added that the building of the fort would provide work and good wages for large numbers of men. It was also seen as benefiting the Parish of Freshwater generally, as work had already begun on the building of cottages in the area (Issue dated 28th November 1863). Messrs George Smith and Co were also awarded the contract for the building of a battery at Hatherwood. It was estimated that approximately five million bricks would be required for the construction of Golden Hill Fort and Hatherwood Battery. Eight kilns were situated on the common around Golden Hill Battery to produce the bricks needed (The Hampshire Advertiser County Newspaper issue dated 1st April 1865).

Reports appeared in The Hampshire Advertiser County Newspaper that work on the fort was coming to an end and that men were starting to be discharged on a weekly basis as the fort neared completion (Issue dated 14th September 1863). In September 1867 the Secretary of State for War, Sir John Pakington and Colonel Jervois RE (Royal Engineers), paid an official visit to carry out an inspection of the nearly completed fort (The Hampshire Advertiser County Newspaper issue dated 21st September 1867). In 1869 it was suggested that the majority of the earthworks surrounding the fort were to be removed as they were causing dampness in the quarters inside. The article also makes mention of the scarcity of work in Freshwater at the time and it was hoped that these works would go ahead to provide employment for local people (The Hampshire Telegraph issue dated 22nd May 1869). A grand ball was held on the opening of the fort with ‘upwards of 150 invitations to the elite of the island’ by the officers. A few days later ‘the ball was renewed at the fort by non-commissioned officers and gunners of the different batteries in the division and their friends who thoroughly enjoyed themselves’ (The Isle of Wight Observer issue dated 11th September 1869).

The original design of the fort was a polygonal shape to accommodate 400 men, however this was considered to be too big and was reduced to 250 men. By the time the fort came to be built in 1863 the design had been reduced further to a smaller hexagonal fort to house 8

officers and 128 men. A hospital (for 14, later 21) was built within the fort (Cantwell, 1985). The entrance to the fort was via a sunken way and tunnel through the glacis. A glacis is "an embankment sloping gradually up to a fortification, so as to expose attackers to defending gunfire" (Collins English Dictionary). On the ground floor were: Guardroom and Cells, Magazine, Tap Room, Canteen & Bar, Cook House, Barrack rooms, Hospital Kitchen, Sergeants rooms, Stores, Laundry, Married Soldiers Rooms, Officers' and Officers' servants rooms. On the upper floor: Barrack rooms, usually for 14 men, a reading room, a 21-bed hospital, Ablutions, Married Soldiers Rooms, Officers' mess, Field Officer's quarters and Officers' rooms (Williams. D., 2020). A tender for the building of a Gun Shed at the fort was advertised in September 1870 (The Hampshire Telegraph issue dated 1st October 1870).

The fort was designed as a double storey brick casemated barracks surrounding an open courtyard. The roof was bomb-proofed by placing earth on it. The earth which slipped in 1868 additionally let in damp but was not removed until the 1950s, when the roof was painted white. Initially 18 light guns were planned to be positioned at each of the six salient angles with two-gun positions between each angle. The land on which the fort was built contains Blue Slipper Clay, which becomes unstable when wet. Spells of heavy rain caused some of the earthworks to fail, accounting in part for the high cost of building works (Cantwell, 1985). To compensate for this the roof gun positions had to be modified to just six positioned at the angles with a firing step between. The guns were 40-pounder breech-loaders, installed in the 1870s and removed around 1903 (Cantwell, 1985). Three musketry caponiers defended the 31-foot-deep dry ditch. (Williams, 2020), they also provided light to the barrack rooms. Access to the upper barrack rooms was provided by a glass roofed veranda supported on iron columns on three sides of the building (Cantwell, 1985).

In 1869 the Royal Artillery were posted to the fort, providing two companies of coast gunners. During the late 1870s a skittle alley, workshop and fire engine house were built in the ditch outside the fort. In 1888 the fort was used as the Western District Artillery School and resulted in the expansion of these out-buildings to the north of the fort to include assorted workshops, stores, barracks, a drill hall, a new hospital and married quarters block (Cantwell, 1985). In April 1908 HMS Gladiator collided with an American liner SS St Paul and sank near Yarmouth with the loss of 28 sailors (Cantwell, 1993). Survivors from Gladiator were cared for at the hospital. In 1912 the majority of the hospital buildings were converted into additional officers' quarters. Between 1920 and 1923 the Royal Irish Rifles were stationed at the fort due to the Irish rebellion against British rule, necessitating Irish regiments serve out of Ireland.

As well as continuing as the School of Gunnery, the First World War saw the fort being used for training infantry regiments, it is estimated that over 30,000 men of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry being trained between 1915 and 1918. The fort was continually in use during the inter-war years including by the Royal Artillery (Williams 2020). In 1926 the fort became a District Establishment, staff based at the fort maintained coastal batteries and Regular Army specialists trained the Territorial Army. From 1932 the headquarters of the Needles Fire Command were based at the fort. During the Second World War the fort became the headquarters of the 530 Coast Regiment Royal Artillery (formerly the Isle of Wight Rifles, until 1937). Training continues with the gunners of the Territorial Army of the Hampshire Heavy Regiment. In 1940 when the threat of German invasion was at its height, the 50th Holding Battalion and the 11th Battalion of the Royal Hampshire Regiment were based at the fort. Initially men from the Royal Militia of Jersey, who had escaped from the Channel Islands prior to the German Occupation, formed the Royal Hampshire Regiment. It is believed that the fort was used for training Canadian soldiers when these units left. From 1945 to 1962 the fort was used as a barracks for the Royal Army Service Corps (RASC) Water Transport Training Company and training their Junior Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) (Cantwell, 1985).

In 1962 the RASC left the fort and in 1964 the Army sold the fort bringing its military connection to an end. From 1969 to 1984 a number of light industries were based there. Restoration of

the interior of the fort began in 1984 and it opened as a tourist attraction, including a cafe and a museum, in 1985 (Cantwell, 1985). However, this was short lived, eventually folding and the fort was left derelict. During this time a number of illegal rave parties were held there. In 2002 the fort was put on the market for £800,000. It was purchased in 2005 by property developer Kevin Clarke and converted into 18 individual apartments, of which 4 are holiday lets, named 'Palmerston House', 'The Well House', 'The Sergeants Quarters' and 'The Tap Room'. The interior of the fort is a closed gated community. A few commercial businesses still remain in the buildings to the north of the fort. The glaxis of the fort is a nature reserve (Williams, 2020).

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Golden Hill Fort and Country Park in the local newspapers

We have set out the data collected from the Isle of Wight local newspapers by the dates at which different activities were happening at Golden Hill Fort. These are:

1869 to 1887 – the arrival of the military and the construction of the Fort and Batteries
1888 to 1913 – the Royal Artillery Western District Artillery School
1914 to 1918 – First World War
1918 to 1925 – Departure of School of Gunnery and Heavy Battery training
1926 to 1938 – District Establishment and Anti-aircraft training
1939 to 1945 – Second World War
1945 to 1962 – the Royal Army Service Corps Water Transport Training Unit
1964 to 1984 – Light industry and Golden Hill Country Park
1984 to 2002 – Tourist attraction and raves
2005 to 2021 – Residential apartments at Golden Hill Fort

1869 to 1887

The arrival of the Military and construction of the forts and Batteries around Freshwater must have had a great impact on the local communities in the 19th Century. Along with the growing tourism trade and the coming of the railways, the population of Freshwater Parish grew from 608 in the 1801 census to 4635 in the 1901 census (Page 1912, 449).

As well as investigating the surviving structures within the Golden Hill Country Park, our local volunteers wanted to learn more about the people associated with Golden Hill from the 1860's to the present day. The archaeological results will be provided in a separate report. Our research focusses on identifying the stories of the actual people involved with Golden Hill during the many roles it has played within the local community.

Construction of Golden Hill Fort

The National Newspaper Archive was searched to identify mentions of the Fort and the following information and people were gathered:

An advert asking for tenders for a War Department contract to clear Golden Hill before 31st March 1864 was published in the Hampshire Telegraph on 24th October 1863 to be sent to the Royal Engineers office, Hill Lodge in Freshwater.

By 28th November 1863 the same newspaper reports a great number of men employed in the construction of the Fort at a good wage. It also says that this 6th military construction had created further building in the area over the last 10 years.

Two years later, on 13th December 1865, the Isle of Wight Times laments the departure of Colonel Bouchier, of the Royal Engineers who oversaw the construction of the new fort. Col Bouchier was moving to Dublin to a new post of Assistant Adjutant-General of Ireland.

The Hampshire Advertiser records on 14th September 1867 that the men employed on the construction of Golden Hill Fort were being discharged and that on 21st September 1867 Sir John Pakington, the Secretary of War, accompanied by Colonel Jervoise and other officers, made an inspection of the nearly completed Fort.

The Isle of Wight Observer reports on 11th September 1869 that a grand Ball was held at the Fort to celebrate the opening of the Fort and states that it was garrisoned by the 21st Brigade of the Royal Artillery. Over of 150 invitations to "the elite of the island" were sent out by officers Colonel Bolton, Major Twiss, Capt. Pottinger, Lieut Nixon, Capt. Baker, Lieut. Gnail, Lieut. Barker, Lieut. Burgess, Lieut. Ross and Dr Mansell. Among those present was, Capt. Barton R.E, Miss Kingston, Miss Thompson, P R Crozier esq, 31st, Mr B R Crozier, 46th, Mrs Isaacson. Miss Isaacson, Miss A Isaacson, Mr Isaacson, Mrs Stoke, Mrs Fanny Paris, Mr Richardson, Mr Cameron, Mr E Cameron, Col. and Mrs Bolton, Major and Mrs Twiss, Capt. and Mrs Pollinger, Mr and Mrs Burgess, Mrs Cameron, Misses Princep, Mrs Pretymann, Admiral and Mrs Crozier, Mr Herbert Farnell, 28th, Mrs Martin, Miss Crozier, Mr and Mrs McHardy R.E, Col. and Mrs Sidney Burrard, Mr and Mrs Fawcett, Mrs G Crook, Mr Scott, Mrs Dawson, Miss Dawson, Mrs Rooke, Miss E Rooke, Mrs P Rooke, Miss Arebar, Mr L Farnell, Mr Forgett, 11th Regiment, Mrs Clarke, Dr and Mrs Taylor, Mr A S Hamond, Mr G Hamond, Miss Pottinger, the Misses Galloway, Mr Walker, 46th Reg. Capt. Mortimer, 11th Reg. Mr Murray, 61st Reg. Capt Ward, R.A. Mr Spike, Mr Bishop, Rev. J P Gaze, Mrs Gaze, Miss Moberly, Dr and Mrs Mansell &c. Another ball was held a few days later at the fort by the Non-Commissioned officers and gunners of the different batteries in the division and their friends who thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

Troop movements

Because the country was not at war, the local newspapers provided information about troop movements. The Hampshire Telegraph notes that that a Detachment of the 21st Brigade Royal Artillery were stationed at Golden Hill on 11th May 1870. They had left the Island under Captain H D Hickley by 21st May 1870.

On 28th May 1870, the same newspaper recorded that three batteries of the 7th Brigade Royal Artillery, under the command of Major Field, arrived in two Brigades from Shoeburyness & Woolwich to be stationed at Cliff End, Victoria and Golden Hill forts.

On 14th January 1874, the newspaper reports that 153 rank and file and four officers of the 102nd Regiment (Royal Bombay Fusiliers) left Parkhurst for Fort Victoria and Golden Hill Fort.

Four years later, the Hampshire Advertiser reports on 3rd April 1880 that the Adjutant-General of the Royal Artillery has notified them that No 1 Battery 7th Brigade Royal Artillery stationed at Victoria Fort, Freshwater will move to Jersey and that No 2 Battery 7th Brigade Royal Artillery stationed at Golden Hill Fort will move to Guernsey. It reports that a detachment of 42nd Royal Highlanders (The Black Watch) under the command of Lieutenant the Hon. Fitzroy G HAY, left Parkhurst the day before for Golden Hill Fort to relieve the Royal Artillery.

Military Social events

It seems that the Royal Artillery stationed at Golden Hill quickly became involved in the social life within the community. The Isle of Wight County Press reports on 27th December 1884 that a Grand Ball was given at the Totland Bay Hotel by Colonel Lyons and the officers of the Royal Artillery with music provided by the Band of the Royal Artillery from Woolwich with a "sumptuous supper and dancing started at 9pm and finished 3am". Amongst the attendees were: Lady and Miss Hammond-Graeme, Lady and Miss Ommanney, Mr Daubney, Col Crozier, Mrs and Miss Moulton Barrett, Mr, Mrs and Miss Ward from Northwood, Rev C Drake, Mrs and Miss Drake, Miss Bowen, Mr and Mrs Richard Ward of The Briary, Mr and Mrs Simeon, Mr De Lisle, Commander Clanchy R.N, Rev, Mrs and misses Gaze, Colonel Williams, Mr, Mrs and Miss Jones, Mr and Miss Elers, Misses Isaacson, Dr and Mrs Hollis, Misses Daly, Major Torkington RA, Mr G Nicholson 1st Hampshire Regiment, Mr Stuart Nicholson RN, Mr H R Adair RA, Messrs F W and H E Pember.

Military sporting events

Sporting teams from the Golden Hill Royal Artillery garrison were also competing against other teams with the Isle of Wight County Press reporting on 19th September 1885 that their cricket team was easily beaten by the Band of the Highlanders at Parkhurst amid bad weather and "unique" decisions by the umpires.

Military crimes and accidents

Some of the gunners stationed at Golden Hill during this time managed to get their names in the Isle of Wight County Press for less legitimate activities. On 25th September 1886, it reported that Gunner William Cunningham was charged with stealing a ham valued at 10s from William Donald, the keeper of the Vine Inn in Freshwater on 15th September. Cunningham said to the Police Constable who found the ham between his bed and the wall that he "would not have done it if I had been sober". He pleaded guilty and was fined £1. A month later, on 2nd October, it reported that Gunner Patrick Canning was charged with fraudulent enlistment for being secretly married, which was not allowed.

Military social activities are reported on in the Isle of Wight County Press including a report on 16th October 1886 of the farewell dinner with supper and songs given by the Warrant Officers, staff, sergeants in the Sergeants Mess for the departure through promotion of Sergeant Mc Beath, Clerk to the Lieutenant Colonel commanding. Sergeants Bell and Russell are mentioned as singing songs and the supper was presided over by Master Gunner Hiscock.

On 13th November 1886, the Isle of Wight County Press records the arrival at Golden Hill of the 7th Battery 1st Brigade North Irish Division Royal Artillery who had come from Bermuda and consisted of Major Playfair and Lieutenants Lendy and Harrison with 82 Non-commissioned officers and men, 5 women and 9 children.

The close social relationship between the Officers and local society were maintained with the Isle of Wight County Press reporting on 5th March 1887 that the officers and men had given a concert "assisted by some ladies and gentlemen of the neighbourhood". It states that readings, songs and performances were given by Colonel Lyons, Miss Drake, Mr Cox, Sgt Russell, Sgt-Major Lloyd, Gr Shurety, Br Burgess, Br Would, Rev P Haythornwaite, Mr Cox,

Miss Drake, Bombr Butler, Mr and Mrs Somers Cocks, Mr SER Nicholls, B S M Lloyd, Sergeant Gardner, Gr Bell.

1888 to 1913

From 1888 Golden Hill Fort became the Western District Artillery School of the Royal Artillery. Whilst the Covid-19 Pandemic halted our research work considerably, a trial research project was undertaken to identify troop movements, social and sporting activities, crimes, accidents and people associated with the Fort between 1888 and 1892 only. Further research should be carried out into the people associated with Golden Hill but was not possible for this report.

Troop movements

The Isle of Wight Observer reports on 11th May 1889 that 100 men and Officers of the 5 – 1 Lancashire Division of the Royal Artillery under Major WALTON had arrived at the Fort and that they were joined by the same number of Officers and men from the 8 – 1 North Irish Brigade, who “went in to camp on the slopes of the fort”. The newspaper reports that will receive instruction, at Warden Point and Cliff End Batteries, in the use of the new range finder.

The Southern Echo reports on 4th May 1891 that the first of the troops who are “to form the camp of instruction at Golden Hill Fort, the headquarters of the Royal Artillery of the Western fortifications” had arrived at Yarmouth Pier and marched with their band to the Golden Hill encampment. It reports that the Battery consisted of 100 non-commissioned officers and men of 39 Southern Royal Artillery under the command of and unnamed Major and Colonel SLADE.

The Isle of Wight County Press reports detailing the troop movements show at Golden Hill between 1889 and 1892 are shown in the table below:

Date of IWCP edition	Regiment	Names	Activities
1 st June 1889	10.1 Lancaster Division RA and of 6.1 Welsh Division RA		110 men of each Division from Gosport and Pembroke arrived to take part in Course practice in position finding and floating target drill
29 th June 1889	10/1 Eastern Division RA and 6/1 Scottish Division RA		150 men of 10/1 Division and 100 men of 6/1 Division arrived for Instruction
6 th July 1889	Royal Engineer Department of Southern Command		Inspected Golden Hill Fort as part of a general inspection of Isle of Wight forts
3 rd May 1890	No 19 Battery Royal Artillery	Captain Gardiner, Lieutenants Harper and Lewis	3 Officers, 108 NCOs and men arrive for preparations for land and sea manoeuvres in connection with the Island defences
24 th May 1890	Notice from Army that 4000 troops would be moved to GH at end of June	Colonel C de B Carey Royal Engineers	
24 th May 1890	IW Highways Commissioners		Grant permission to military authorities to erect a line of telegraph posts from GHF to Warden Point

21 st June 1890	Royal Engineers		Mobilisation of the Garrison Artillery for military operations along the coast with annual drills for hostilities started with 4000 men and officers garrisoned at all forts and batteries in West Wight including Garrison Artillery of Southern District, 4 th Rifle Brigade, 1 st and 2nd Hants Artillery volunteers and the Isle of Wight, Artillery, East Surrey and Wicklow Artillery Militias
28 th June 1890	Wicklow Artillery Militia	Colonel Howard Brooks	Regimental Sports. Says that the Wicklow Artillery Militia are camping on the hillside in white tents
19 th July 1890	Northern Irish Battery	Lieutenant A H Harrison	Battery will be leaving Golden Hill for Ireland at the end of July
2 nd August 1890	Western Division Royal Artillery	Major Bunney	Around 250 men left for Gosport
2 nd August 1890	No 41 Battery South Division Royal Artillery	Major Tabor, Lieutenants Blandford	90 NCOs and men arrive from Fort Grange, Gosport for Instruction in coastal defence
2 nd May 1891	39 th Battery Royal Artillery		6000 troops expected at Whitsuntide will not arrive as the May mobilisations will not go ahead. 39 th Battery will carry out summer manoeuvres
30 th May 1891	39 th Southern Division Royal Artillery	Lieutenant-Colonel F Slade	Left Golden Hill after a month's Instruction in Military tactics
30 th May 1891	31 st and 34 th Divisions Royal Artillery		Arrived at Golden Hill for a month's Instruction in Military tactics
4 th July 1891	31 st and 34 th Divisions Royal Artillery	Major Saltmarsh; Major Burton	Left Golden Hill after a month's Instruction in Military tactics
4 th July 1891	No 2 Battery Southern Division and 42 Battery Divisions Royal Artillery	Major Blake	No 2 Battery from Weymouth and 42 Battery from Portsmouth arrived at Golden Hill after a month's Instruction in Military tactics
5 th September 1891	No 1 Company Southern Division Royal Artillery		Arrived from Portsmouth for annual gun practice
11 th June 1892	Southern District Royal Artillery	Major Lane; Col. Walkey	Rehearsal of mobilisation on troops in the event of an invasion of Portsmouth. Led by the Duke of Connaught commanding the Southern District
14 th May 1892	14th Company Southern Division, Royal Artillery	Colonel Slade	200 men and 8 Officers arrived from Weymouth

Figure 2: 1889-1892 troop movements from IWCP

Military Social events

With so many troops based at the Fort, the social relationship between the Officers and higher levels of the local and Island society continued in this four-year period. Celebratory events reported in the IW County Press between 1888 and 1892 include:

Date of edition	Event	Activities and names
10 th March 1888	Concert to entertain troops	Organised by Adjutant Carte with songs and recitations from Gunner Laskey, Mrs Grantham, Captain Lambert RA, Sapper Annetts, Lieutenant Speranza RE, Mr DR Lambert RE, Miss Drake, Mt Wilfred Ward, Bomb Moore RA, Gunner Baker, Bomb Goodenough, Mrs Grantham
24 th March 1888	Supper and Smoking Concert	Given by warrant officers, staff sergeants and sergeants of Western Forces District at Sergeants Mess with performers QM Cox, Sgt James, SM Freeman, QMS Hopkinson, Sgt Scanlan, Master gunner Land, Sgt Flynn, SM Bell, Sgt Shepherd, Sgt Gobble, Sgt Miller, SM Cooper.
23 rd March 1889	Military Ball	Given by NCOs of RA, Corporal W J Curry
23 rd March 1889	Retirements from Royal Artillery	Quarter-Master Sergeant John Hopkinson after 21 years; Master Gunner Land, Quarter-Master Cox Royal Engineers; Sergeant Sheppard
11 th January 1890	Smoking Concert	At Royal Artillery Sergeants Mess with Royal Engineers. mentions Master-Gunner Land, Sgt-Majors Dawe, Thompson, Downer, Kellagher, Westwood; Sgts Gyngle, Derby Kelly, Miller, Kirby, Sharp and Quarter-master Sgts Russell, Staff Sergeant Wilmott and caterers Sgts Bishop, Kelly and Hadden
23 rd August 1890	Freshwater and Totland Annual Horticultural Show	At Farringford with special prizes awarded in the class of "Window boxes for soldiers in the western Forts" which was won by Corporal Coomber, with Corporal Miller 2 nd and the Royal Artillery Band Room in 3 rd place, all based at Golden Hill
15 th November 1890	Farewell Supper	For Battery Quarter-master Sgt Bennett being transferred to another post, held at Sergeants Mess. K Neale Steward of NCO's canteen presented on behalf of 27 th Southern Division
29 th November 1890	Farewell Supper	Gunner Hooking of 27 th Battery Southern Division left after 12 years' service
31 st January 1891	Fire service	Fire destroys part of Barker Lodge in Freshwater with military fire brigade from Golden Hill extinguishing the blaze to save the rest of the house
4 th April 1891	Smoking Concert	In Sgts Mess to celebrate departure of Staff Sergeants who have completed a 1-month course of Instruction. Mentions Sgt-Majors Archer, Baker, Baskett, Blenkin, Brickwood, Davidson, Dobson, Downer, Eaton, Edwards, Johnson, Littlewood, Miller, Pennefeather, Vickeray, Westwood, Williams, Quarter-master Sgts Ireland and Knowles and Master-Gunner Land
11 th April 1891	Concert	Royal Artillery Minstrel Troupe give concert at the Assembly Rooms

Figure 3: 1889-1892 military social events from IWCP

Military Sporting activities

The garrisons at Golden Hill Fort also took part in sporting activities on the Island and those recorded in the Isle of Wight County Press are shown in the table below

Date of edition	Event	Activities and names
10 th March 1888	Concert to entertain troops	Organised by Adjutant Carte with songs and recitations from Gunner Laskey, Mrs Grantham, Captain Lambert RA, Sapper Annetts, Lieutenant Speranza RE, Mr DR Lambert RE, Miss Drake, Mt Wilfred Ward, Bomb Moore RA, Gunner Baker, Bomb Goodenough, Mrs Grantham
6 th April 1889	Football	GHF RA versus Newport Football Club mentions Lieutenants Anderson, Collins, Cave, Dawson, Harrison, Hoblyn, O'Connor, Matthews, Symonds
6 th April 1889	Golf Luncheon	Needles Golf Club entertained to lunch by Colonel Owen and officers
24 th August 1889	Royal Artillery Sports	On Parade Ground at GHF mentions General, the Hon Sir Leicester Smyth commanding the Southern District
12 th October 1889	Football	Royal Engineer (GH) mentions Lieutenants Collins, Cave, Dawson, Gibbs, Gilbert, Harris, Harrison, Hayman, Hill, Hoose and Gunner Gibbs and Sapper Hailes
16 th November 1889	Football	mentions Lieutenants Anderson, Collins, Dawson, Gibbs, Gilbert, Harrison, Hayman, Hoad.
30 th November 1889	Long Service and Good conduct award	Awarded by Colonel Owen to Master Gunner Lloyd
13 th December 1890	Football	IW County (Shanklin) Challenge Cup GH versus Newport, mentions Lieutenants Collins, Dawson, Divell, Gibbs, Gilbert, Hoose, Leate, Thom, Thomason, Webster, Wilkes
3 rd January 1891	Football	Newport FC to play GH RA at GH on 4 th February
28 th March 1891	Football Cup Final	IW Football (Assoc) Cup played won by RA GH versus Sandown. Mentions Lieutenants Collins, Dawson, Ellershaw and Gunners Cummins, Hughes, McCullum, Turner, Webster and Wilkes, Bombardier Gibbs and Corporal Gilbert
16 th May 1891	Cricket	22 nd versus 39 th Southern Division RA mentions Battery Quarter-master Sgt Steel and Captains Ellershaw and Scott
20 th June 1891	Cricket	27 th Battalion RA GH versus Newport scoresheet mentions Lieutenants Donaldson, Hale, Collins, Pennethorne, Sergeant Marshall, Corporal Gilbert, Privates Batchelor, Bradley, Hoose and Ardane and Surgeon Pearse
27 th June 1891	Cricket	GH Garrison versus Ryde – scoresheet mentions Lieutenants Donaldson, Brown, Hale, Dawson, Pennethorne, Sergeant Marshall, Corporal Gilbert,

		Grenadiers Clarke and Batchelor, Bombardier Mitchell, Master Gunner Land
4 th July 1891	Cricket	GH Garrison versus Shanklin – scoresheet mentions: Master Gunner Land, Corporal Gilbert, Lieutenants Collins, Captain Stratford, Grenadiers Batchelor, Reid Taylor and Hoose, Bugler Burridge and Surgeon Lilly.
27 th July 1891	Cricket	GH Garrison versus Ventnor, scoresheet mentions: Gunner Batchelor, Corporal Gilbert, Lieutenants Kirkpatrick, Brown, Collins Ellershaw, Dawson and Pennefeather, Sergeant Marshall, Corporal Reid and Sergeant Major Smith
7 th November 1891	Football	RA GH versus White Star in IW County Cup, mentions Lieutenants Collins and Dawson
21 st November 1891	Football	Artillery (GH) versus Cowes, mentions Lieutenant Dawson

Figure 4: 1889-1892 military sporting events from IWCP

Military crimes

Having so many troops stationed within the Freshwater area no doubt caused occasional friction with some members of the local community. Those recorded in the Isle of Wight County Press between 1888 and 1892 are shown in the table below

Date of edition	Name	Event details
9 th February 1889	Gunner Patrick Barrett, Royal Artillery	Found Guilty of stealing a watch from Sidney Brown, Watchmaker, and pawned it in Newport and sentenced to 14 days hard labour
10 th May 1890	Bombardier Frederick Mayhill, Gunners Harry Andrews and Frank Gibbs	Found Guilty of stealing a fish from Emily Louisa Apple, a fishmonger living in Freshwater and fined £1 each
20 th December 1890	Gunner James Walker (aged 22)	Found Not Guilty of criminally assaulting Annie Ansell, a domestic servant in Freshwater
30 th May 1891	Gunner Joseph Donnley	Found Guilty of stealing an overcoat from John Mills and sentenced to 10 days hard labour
5 th December 1891	Bombardier Charles William Batchelor	Summoned to Court to explain why he had not paid support to an illegitimate child with Eliza Jane Read of Freshwater and ordered to pay 1s 9d per week until the child was 16

Figure 5: 1889-1892 military crimes from IWCP

1913 to 1918

As the 20th Century turned towards what everyone at the time called “The Great War”, thinking that international warfare could never happen on a global scale again, Golden Hill Fort continued to play a vital role in the defence of the Solent.

The School of Gunnery continued and was used for training infantry regiments. The newspaper reports show that the Royal Garrison Artillery (RGA), the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry (DCLI) and the 4th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment were all present at the Fort in this period.

One special and unique role which the School of Gunnery at Golden Hill Fort played in the advancement of artillery in 1913 deserves a mention. Not reported in the newspapers at the time, two letters in the IWCP in 1944 and 1968 describe how the mechanical staff of the GH School of Gunnery designed a special high angle mounting on which 4-inch guns could be mounted to make the very first anti-aircraft gun in the country. It was fired from the Needles Battery in November 1913, with two large box kites towed at high speed by the Destroyer Nubian down the channel just off the Needles. The targets were 200 feet up in the air and it was reported that 40 shells were fired from the gun and "almost every one burst near the target, eventually one severed the cable and the kits soared off in to the sky".

Troop movements

Isle of Wight County Press reports detailing the troop movements show at Golden Hill between 1913 and 1918 are shown in the table below:

Date of IWCP edition	Regiment	Names	Activities
19 th April 1913	2 Companies of Royal Garrison Artillery		Camping at GHF annual gunnery course
31 st May 1913	Portsmouth Garrison Artillery Territorials		6-inch gunnery shooting
25 th October 1913	Royal Garrison Artillery	C J Fellows	Promoted to Captain (district officer) in RGA. Risen from ranks 19 years, was formerly Master Gunner at GHF
22 nd November 1913	No 11 Command RGA	Major C de Sausmarez DSO	Posted to command of No 108 (Heavy Battery) Fort Fareham
27 th December 1913	RGA, Royal Field Artillery Special reserve	Second Lieutenant G F Harvey	Posted to 11 Company RGA at GH, noted that very few troops left in western forts as most on furlough for Xmas
27 th December 1913	RA School of Gunnery	Major R N Lockhart	Transferred to Bermuda
27 th December 1913	RA School of Gunnery	Major HC Moultrie	Now replaced Major Lockhart as Staff Officer of the RA School of Gunnery
27 th December 1913	RA School of Gunnery	Captain O C Niven	Now Gunnery Instructor
27 th December 1913	RGA at GHF		On New Year's Eve drafts of NCOs and men will leave GHF for Bermuda, Jamaica and Gibraltar
26 th September 1914	4 th Battalion Royal Warwickshire		Reconstructing Old Rifle range at East Afton. 3000 men of Lord Kitchener's army are in W Wight and billeted in empty houses and public halls whilst a number of huts for their accommodation are being erected at GH. Military Drilling continuously on parade grounds around GH

19 th December 1914	Nos. 11, 32, 33, and 3* Companies of the R.G.A.	Major Scott	Have been training for heavy field battery work left Golden Hill for Lydd, whence, after further training, they will go to the Front.
21 st December 1914	4 th Battalion Royal Warwickshire		Inspecting Officer of camps moves the detachment camped on the slopes of Golden Hill to billets in public halls because of the flooded camping ground and construction of long line of huts on south side of the hill is proceeding rapidly for the men
23 rd January 1915			The men of Kitchener's Army billeted around Freshwater can now move into the huts around Golden Hill
20 th November 1915	YMCA		Storms blew down a large marquee for the soldiers being erected by the YMCA on the slopes at Golden Hill

Figure 6: 1913-1918 troop movements from IWCP

Military Social activities

Unsurprisingly, there are very few celebratory events reported in the IW County Press between 1913 and 1918. The social events mentioned are for the raising of funds for soldiers' charities and to keep the soldiers entertained, rather than the large grand balls for the more well-connected residents as was seen in the first forty years of military occupation:

Date of edition	Event	Activities and names
10 th May 1913	Concert in aid of Soldiers club	mentions Band Sergeant Major Bruner, Major WE Wailes, Lieutenants Sharp, Ford, Staff Sergeant and Mrs Nettleton, Gunners Richardson, Cole, Drain, Warmen, Kay, Stokes, and Fletcher, Br Bloomfield and exhibition boxing from middleweight's Br Antingham and Gr Watling and heavy weights Gunners Strong and Debeham
27 th March 1916	YMCA appeal	For money and gifts in kind for newly erected marquee at GH (books, mags, games, gramophone records, piano billiard tables) to Mr W J Allen Camp Leader YMCA GHF
1 st April 1916	Whist Drive and performance	NCOs of Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry GH and on Easter Monday was a matinee performance for charity comic sketch by members
6 th May 1916	Whist Drive and concert	DCLI corporals to aid DCLI prisons of war at Congregational Lecture Hall also a marathon race.
29 th July 1916	Regimental garden plot competition	Best kept garden plot of companies of the DCLI at GH weds, won by K Company, G company 2 nd and H company 3 rd (weighed in with 720lbs of cabbage for the men's messing), J company 4 th and consolation prize to C company, the Sergeants Mess were commended for their floral beds.
9 th December 1916	Lecture with lantern slides about Pompeii	Given by Rev Prothero at GHF in connection with the YMCA
2 nd March 1918	Concert	No 4 RGA Officer cadet school at GH held on Tues evening at the cinema, proceeds to Soldiers Club,

		played violins, piano, singing, vocalisations and monologues
9 th March 1918	Whist Drive and Singing contest	held at No 1 dining hall GH in connection with the DCLI corporals mess for Prisoners of War on weds, 160 players Ladies and civilian men and soldiers.
23 rd March 1918	Concert	at Lecture Hall included Lieutenant Manley who was a clever ventriloquist.

Figure 7: 1913-1918 military social events from IWCP

Military Sporting events

Only two sporting activities are recorded in the Isle of Wight County Press between 1914 and 1918. On 18th September 1915, a water sports competition at Totland Pier was Arranged by 4th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment from GHF.

On 9th September 1916 a shooting competition was arranged by the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. The report mentions K company (Sgt Edwards) and E, F, G, H, J, companies.

Accidents and crimes

Soldiers at GHF continued to be involved in crimes and accidents. Those recorded in the Isle of Wight County Press between 1913 and 1918 are shown in the table below:

Date of edition	Name	Event details
26 th April 1913	Grenadier A Shoesmith, Royal Garrison Artillery	Found Guilty of assaulting Bombardier Arthur Debenham of Cliff End Battery and sentenced to 14 days hard labour
6 th June 1914	Gunner Arthur Shoesmith	Found guilty of cycling without light through Totland and fined 7s 6d
27 th June 1914	Gunners Spencer Jenner and Edward Brown of RGA	Charged with obtaining free beer by deception at Royal Needles Hotel Tap, dismissed on payment of 7s 6d costs.
11 th July 1914	Gunner Michael McClinchey	Charged with being drunk and disorderly in Newport, fined 4s
3 rd October 1914	Private Thomas Thornton of 4 th Warwickshire Regiment	Found guilty of assaulting a young girl and sentenced to 1 month's prison with hard labour
26 th November 1914	Sergeant O'Connell, Military Police	Fell from drawbridge at GHF into moat but recovered
9 th January 1915	Privates Walter Cothrill (24) and William Jones (21) Royal Warwickshire Regiment	Absent Without Leave on 24 th December
11 th September 1915	Privates Joseph Edward Bird, William Fenton and Patrick Hendry of Royal Warwickshire Regiment	Absent Without Leave and tried to get on 7.15am boat for Southampton
30 th September 1916	Death of Lieutenant George Stanley Charles Baker DCLI (20)	Killed by grenade during training, mentions Private Edward James Boyles, Sgt Instructor William Allen
26 th January 1918	John Slater DCLI	Stole wallet, a watch and £3 10s from Arthur Reynolds, committed to trial in Assizes.
2 nd and 9 th February 1918	Battery Quarter-master Sergeant Michael Carroll	Killed by CQMS Henry Michael Shead DCLI (see below)

13 th April 1918	John E Hollingsworth, 18	Stealing bicycle from Ralph Dennison Gilbert, cycle agent of Avenue Rd, sentenced to a month prison
28 th March 1918	Private Arthur Sidney Ashman (33)	Committed suicide at GHF, twice wounded on Western Front and had shell shock
7 th December 1918	Bombardier Joseph L Coombes RGA, 19,	Stealing a bicycle off Robert Henry Gordon Potter of RGA also at GH

Figure 8: 1913-1918 military crimes from IWCP

The Isle of Wight County Press called the death of Battery Quarter-master Sergeant Michael Carroll at Golden Hill Fort a “shocking tragedy”. Carroll lived with his wife and 7 children under 12 years of age at Church Place and had been serving on the Western Front for 3 years. During his previous home leave in September 1917, Carroll discovered that his wife, Dora Gertrude Carroll had been having an affair with Company Quarter-master Henry Samuel Shead who she had met whilst doing the Company laundry. Carroll believed that Shead was the father of his wife’s youngest child. Carroll had made Shead come to his house and apologise, on which occasion he had given Shead a “thrashing”.

After his 2-week Home Leave in February 1918, Carroll was heard to make threats against Shead and had made his way to Golden Hill Fort on the evening before he was due back to the Western Front. The newspaper describes how Shead had been sleeping in another room because he wanted protection from Carroll. Sergeant Messon, who was Caterer of the Sergeants Mess stated that Carroll had made threats against Shead in the Sergeants Mess.

Carroll broke down the door of Shead’s room and lunged for him, after a short struggle Shead shot Carroll twice with a gun, he later admitted, taken from a German Officer on the Western Front. Evidence was given by Sergeant Allen, CSM William Crawford RGA, Private Joseph Lawrence, the Company Storeman of the Labour Battalion attached to the DCLI, Captain Charles Frederick Graves RAMC, Captain John Trevor Hay-Hill commanding D Company DCLI of which Shead was Quarter-master Sergeant and Lieutenant Leslie Marshall Timbury DCLI.

1919 to 1925

Troop movements

On 31st July 1919, The Isle of Wight County Press reports on important military changes affecting the military community in the West Wight. The School of Gunnery, which had been at Golden Hill for over 20 years would be transferred to Shoeburyness. The local forts were due to be garrisoned by a skeleton Establishment and it is stated that Golden Hill Fort would be occupied by a mobile siege battery of about 120 men. The newspaper states that the changes would be very much regretted locally as the School was a valuable asset to the West Wight commercially.

On 25th December 1920, the following advert for the sale of surplus stores from Golden Hill appeared in the IWCP:



Figure 9: IWCP advert for sale of surplus military stores from GHF

Isle of Wight County Press reports detailing the troop movements show at Golden Hill between 1919 and 1925 are shown in the table below:

Date of IWCP edition	Regiment	Names	Activities
20 th October 1923	Royal Ulster Rifles	Regimental Sergeant Major W Ward	Presented with a silver rose bowl by officers of the Hamps Cadet Battalion as a thank you for instruction during their recent camp.
20 th December 1923	District Establishment RGA	Captain (DO) H Underwood RA; Major R P Varwell Adjutant Captain C W Panter MBE.	Officer commanding the Depot of the RUR at GH
19 th April 1924	Royal Ulster Rifles		The main body of the RUR from Depot at GHF left by 8.40am boat from Yarmouth on Friday on route to Armagh Northern Ireland
26 th April 1924	2 batteries of Heavy Artillery		c 180 men are to be stationed at GHF rendered vacant by the departure of the RUR Depot, due to arrive in about a fortnight.
15 th May 1926	Brigade of Royal Artillery		came to GH for a 6-week gunnery course on April 23 rd returned to the mainland a few days later.

. Figure 10: 1919-1925 troop movements from IWCP

Military Social events

Date of edition	Event	Activities and names
31 st July 1920	Billiard and Card tournament	Members of the Conservative Club were hosted in the Sergeants Mess
17 th December 1921	Soldiers Club Bazaar	mentions Mrs Goodman wife of Major Goodman DSO (commanding the Royal Ulster Rifles Depot GH)
20 th January 1923	Ex-servicemen's children's Tea	300 kids given by women section of British Legion on Mess tables lent by men of the Royal Ulster Rifles at GH

29 th December 1923	Depot of the Royal Ulster Rifles	Christmas festivities included the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders concert party "The Merrymakers", on following weds the married families of the Depot held a bountiful tea in the gymnasium. Xmas day about 200 men remained in barracks and Dining hall was beautifully decorated and fare included turkey, beef and plum pudding. "The temperate habits of the recruits was reflected in the huge consumption of lemonade in preference to anything stronger". On previous evening hosted a children's tea in Sergeants mess. On Boxing Day 6 charabancs commissioned and took about 100 men to football match at Bembridge – Depot V East Wighters
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Figure 11: 1919-1925 military social events from IWCP

Military crimes

Only two criminal cases involving soldiers from the Fort are recorded in the Isle of Wight County Press between 1919 and 1926 and are shown in the table below:

Date of edition	Name	Event details
19 th November 1921	George Orchison (26) and William Arthur Davies (28) Royal Ulster Regiment	Housebreaking in Colwell Bay stealing clothes jewellery, camera and revolver owned by Brigadier General Robert Campbell
26 th January 1924	William A Spence and George Mackie, both 18, riflemen in RUR	Maliciously damaged plate glass windows of R G Howe, greengrocer of Sunnyside Broadway Totland and window of C W Chiverton of the Broadway Garage Totland Bay with the knobs on their canes, fined £1 each and damages of £6.

. Figure 12: 1919-1925 crimes from IWCP

1926 to 1938

Troop movements

In 1926 Golden Hill Fort became the District Establishment and staff based at the fort maintained coastal batteries and Regular Army specialists trained the Territorial Army. From 1932 the headquarters of the Needles Fire Command were based at the fort. Isle of Wight County Press reports detailing the troop movements show at Golden Hill between 1926 and 1938 are shown in the table below:

Date of IWCP edition	Regiment	Names	Activities
5 th June 1926	British Legion		Taking over the Soldiers Club due to the withdrawal of the permanent Garrison at GHF
17 th April 1929	Devon Heavy Brigade RA (T)		from Plymouth commenced their annual training on Sat, they are occupying GHF and will be gunnery practice nearly every day next week
5 th August 1933	Boy Scouts		Annual camp with campfire for 1000 by Freshwater Troop at GH

11 th August 1934	Boy Scouts		Annual campfire for 500 at GH for 4 th year in succession
6 th October 1934			Considerable renovation work at the barracks, thought it will be an anti-aircraft section of RA
9 th March 1935	Anti-aircraft Section of RA		New buildings being erected so GHF can be used as a station of a brigade of AA artillery c 400-500 men
13 th July 1935	Gordon Boys School, Woking		2 weeks holiday and their band played for large crowds Alum Bay Hotel grounds on Sunday and at Freshwater Bay on Tues eve.
25 th June 1938	Gordon Boys School, Woking		200 boys arrived for 2-week camp at GH
6 th August 1938	Boys Brigade, Church Brigade and Boy Scouts		Camped at Hill Farm and Golden Hill
13 th August 1938	Boy Scouts		annual camp fire sing song held at GH, scout troops from Northampton, Oxford, Reading, Westminster, Chichester, Eltham, Petersham and Ham, Hatcham, St Pancras, West London, Perivale, Egham and Woolwich.

Figure 13: 1926-1938 military and other troop movements from IWCP

Military Social events

Celebratory events reported in the IW County Press between 1926 and 1938 include:

Date of edition	Event	Activities and names
29 th May 1926	Empire Day grand ball at Drill Hall	c 250 dancers including officers and men of the Brigade in training at GH
12 th June 1926	Dance	The Heavy Brigade RA who are having gunnery training in the W forts held a dance at GHF Friday week which was attended by numerous civilians

Figure 14: 1926 - 1938 military social events from IWCP

Crimes at Golden Hill Fort

Only two criminal cases are recorded in the Isle of Wight County Press between 1926 and 1938 and one involved boys from the National Memorial Gordon Boys School, set up in 1885 for destitute boys aged 14 to 18. The school was run on military lines with boys assigned army ranks and instructed in trades as well as schooling.

The details are shown in Figure 15 overleaf:

Date of edition	Name	Event details
29 th May 1926	Henry Hamblin, Dealer of Freshwater	charged with being in unlawful possession of Government Stores 16s 10 ½ d of oats after 2 soldiers sold him oats, case dismissed, mentions

		Lieutenant George Montgomery with the Heavy Brigade RA
9 th July 1932	Boys from Gordon Boys Home, Woking	Summer holiday at GHF and stole sweets, pocket watch from beach hut and chocolate, cakes, cigarette and money from All Saints Church, sentenced to 2 years' probation

Figure 15: 1926 - 1938 crimes at Golden Hill Fort from IWCP

1939 to 1945

Troop movements

During the Second World War the Fort became the headquarters of the 530 Coast Regiment Royal Artillery (formerly the Isle of Wight Rifles, until 1937). Training continued with the gunners of the Territorial Army of the Hampshire Heavy Regiment.

In 1940 the 50th Holding Battalion and the 11th Battalion of the Royal Hampshire Regiment were based at the fort. It is believed that the fort was used for training Canadian soldiers when these units left.

With much more discretion than shown during the First World War, the Isle of Wight County Press reports detailing the troop movements at Golden Hill between 1939 and 1945 are shown in the table below:

Date of IWCP edition	Regiment	Names	Activities
15 th July 1939	Leicestershire Regiments	Major J C Bernays in command	300 Depot staff from Leicester and details from Aldershot came to ready GH for the draft of Militia men who will occupy the hastily erected huts on the slopes of the Fort and expected to be there until September
12 th August 1939	Leicestershire Regiments	Major J C Bernays	Major Bernays wrote thanking Freshwater Parish Council for their letter of welcome
1 st September 1945	303 searchlight battery GH		Detachment present at the United Thanksgiving service on Sunday Week

Figure 16: 1939 - 1945 military troop movements from IWCP

Military Social events

The only celebratory event reported in the IW County Press between 1939 and 1945 was on 19th August 1939 when the Officers mess at GHF were entertained by the concert party of the Depot of Leicestershire Regiment. The newspaper reports that many local inhabitants invited to enjoy choruses, solos, duets, trios, hill-billy songs and "a popular extra was a display of acrobatics by two finely built young soldiers" and they repeated the show on weds and Thurs at Norton Holiday camp.

1945 to 1962

Royal Army Service Corps Water Training Transport Company

From 1945 to 1962 the Fort was used as a barracks for the Royal Army Service Corps (RASC) Water Transport Training Company and training their Junior Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) (Cantwell, 1985).

On 1st June 1946, the Isle of Wight County Press reported that a large German landmine had been found behind Golden Hill Fort which was thought to have been dropped in 1941. By 15th June it had been made safe and removed by the Bomb Disposal Squad of the Royal Engineers.

Military social events

Social activities continued at Golden Hill Fort including an Open Night and dance (reported on 26th January 1946 in the IWCP) in the Sergeants Mess at GHF for local civilian guests at which CSM Goddard was the MC and RASC bandsmen provided the music. It was also reported on 28th December 1946 that the personnel of the RASC Waterborne Training wing of the RASC entertained nearly 100 children and members of the British Legion to a party in the gym on Christmas Eve. On 8th November 1947 the IWCP reported that the Sergeants of the RASC at GH gave a firework display and refreshments to the children of the married quarters and Norton Green with the largest bonfire in the area.

Military crimes and accidents

Some crimes were still being committed by personnel stationed at Golden Hill. On 12th April 1947 a Merchant skipper from Wales was charged with receiving a stolen dingy and Aldis lamp (for semaphore signal) from Private Sidney Gray and another unnamed Private of the RASC. Captain Alan H Mason RASC of GH identified the goods as stolen. The Merchant skipper was fined £10

In 1948 the IWCP reports on five court cases involving soldiers stationed at Golden Hill. On 10th April, at IW County Petty sessions, E W Brewer of Chiswick pleaded guilty to stealing a camera valued at £23 15s from the officer's mess at GHF. The camera belonged to Captain Anthony Sill RASC and was taken from a safe in Officers Mess. The accused had been employed in officers mess since being demobilised after the war and had a key to the safe for his duties and was fined £5.

On 1st May 24th John Thomas Whittemore of 985 Water Transport Training Company RASC pleaded guilty in court to charges of forgery. Stanley King, formerly of the RASC had been demobbed in February 1947, but had not received the special Post Office account book to withdraw his money. On two days in May of that year, the book was used to withdraw money at Newport Post Office. Whittemore admitted the crime and was committed for trial at Hampshire Quarter Sessions and bailed.

On 16th June 1948 the IWCP reported that an army truck from GHF had been in a collision with a motor coach and demolished the brick porch of a house opposite the church at Shalfleet. On 31st July George Murray Harper RASC at GHF pleaded not guilty to driving army truck without due care and attention. Sergeant Nelson Edwin Trowbridge of Royal Army Education corps gave evidence as he had been following on his motorbike. Lieutenant John Desmond Lofts of RASC told the Court that the accused had already been ordered to pay for the damage by commanding officer and the case was dismissed.

On 28th August 1948 Privates John P Ratcliffe, George Pilkington and Albert J Gallop of the 985 company RASC at GH were found guilty of stealing fittings and cash from a telephone kiosk in Station Road Freshwater on 7th August. Witnesses were Robert Troughton an RASC Private who saw accused in the Red Lion pub at 8.30 and again at 11.30pm in the West Wight games club and Corporal Angus McAllister Galloway. They were sentenced to 3 months imprisonment.

On 25th September 1948 Corporal Walter V Lee and Private Reginal P Webb of 985 company RASC at GHF pleaded not guilty to theft of a bike pump from a motor yacht, but were both fined £3.

The RASC themselves were the victims of a crime, when on 1st June 1946 the IWCP reported that thieves had broken into NAAFI canteen at GHF and stole the week's cigarette ration for the 500 members of the Waterborne Training Centre of the RASC stationed there.

In the 1950's the IWCP reports more court cases against men of the RASC stationed at Golden Hill. On 14th January Private Ronald Kelly 1950 was charged with shop breaking and larceny after stealing a pair of binoculars from the shop of William Henry Davy at Stroud Cottages. On 28th January 1950 Private Leonard Basil Murray pleaded guilty to having commercial petrol in his motorbike tank, in the first case on Island under the 1948 Act He had gone AWOL in Ryde and was fined £15 with 12 months driving licence suspension.

On 17th February 1951 Private Andrew Boughey (aged 19) pleaded guilty to theft from Unit stores of 24 lb margarine, 14lb sugar and 1/2lb cooking fat for his mother-in-law. He had got married on 22nd January and was fined £2 and his mother-in-law, Rita Lillian Jones was also fined £2 for receiving stolen goods. On 11th August 1951 Quarter Master Sergeant Alfred Millborrow (38) of WTC RASC was court marshalled at Farnborough and found guilty of fraudulent misapplication of public property of £9 19s and 6d for fuel used in the married quarters. Mrs Maud Thompson (husband Sgt T W Thompson serving in Aden), Mrs Haran and Mrs Rose Florence Collins, all with husbands serving overseas, gave evidence in court and Millborrow was found guilty and received 6 months detention and reduced to the ranks. On 22nd December 1951 it was reported that an army transport lorry had skidded through a hedge and down a bank at Hill Lane. The driver was Private E Cobden of RASC WT company at GHF.

On 30th June 1951, it was reported that it was believed that a bayonet used to force entry into NAAFI canteen at GHF during weekend and 8400 cigarettes worth £73 were stolen.

The IWCP continued to report on the court cases involving RASC soldiers based at Golden Hill into the early 1960s.

On 11th May 1961 Private Michael Vernon Moss (19) of 6th Training Battalion had charges of stealing a bicycle from Frank William Russell of Queen's Road dismissed. The accused stated that he thought that the bicycle, which had been left outside the stationer's shop on Station Rd, had been abandoned. In the same edition of the IWCP Private John Menzies (32) of RASC GHF pleaded not guilty to stealing 60 yards wire mesh and fence posts property of RDC, but was found guilty and fined £5. On 25th May 1961 David Eccles (18) and Clifford Hawkins (20) both army drivers of GHF pleaded guilty to taking and driving a shooting break (vehicle) in Shanklin, they stated they had decided to drive back to freshwater and were fined £20 each. On 2nd September 1961 Gene Evryll Miskell of WTC RASC GHF pleaded guilty to travelling on the Portsmouth to Ryde ferry without a ticket and was fined £2. A more serious crime was reported on 25th November 1961 when five RASC soldiers (3 from GHF) were convicted for assaults on civilians. Private Bernard Martin (23), Private Daniel Dick (22) and Lance Corp Arthur Barber (24) committed "bodily harm" to three Freshwater men. More minor infringements of the law were reported on 23rd December 1961 when Private John George Bartlett (22) of RASC GHF was convicted of stealing a translator radio from a house in Brambles Lane. Private Roland Seymour (22), a National Serviceman within the last 3 months of his service, pleaded guilty to travelling on Portsmouth to Ryde ferry without a ticket and was fined £4.

Departure of RASC

On 4th November 1961 an advert appeared in the IWCP for the disposal by sale of surplus War Department boats, two 14ft lifeboats lying on Victoria Pier near Yarmouth, by competitive tender with forms available from Water transport training company RASC at GHF.

On 11th November 1961 it was reported that the Freshwater and Totland British Legion, Remembrance Day parade would take place at All Saints church and that it was probably the last one in which a military contingent would take part. The Commanding Officer of WT Training company at GHF, Major C F C Dunford Wood, agreed to take the salute.

In 1962 the RASC left the fort and on 24th February of that year the IWCP reported that the Water Training Company of RASC stationed at GH and Fort Victoria would attend the last parade on Thursday ahead of their departure from Island. It reported that 8 civilian staff had been retained to keep a day and night watch on the both forts and that last troops would leave next month when the WTC would be absorbed by the 71 Company RASC (WT) at Portsmouth

1962 to 1969

Sale of Golden Hill Fort

With the military leaving Golden Hill, the local government on the Island showed that they were interested in the site itself. In the IWCP of 20th January of that year, the IW Rural District Council had instructed their Clerk to investigate the possible of acquisition of the married quarters at GHF when they were no longer needed by the War Dept.

On 21st April 1962, it was reported that the Isle of Wight County Council had been asked to designate part of GHF for industrial activities instead of the disused railway station at Yarmouth was being used for the youth club. It reported that a request had been made for the southern area to be scheduled as a public open space. The General Purposes and Public Health Comm of IW Rural District Council approved these requests and also agreed to consider at their next meeting the desirability of acquiring GHF and other redundant military establishments in the West Wight. On 26th May 1962, an advert appeared in the IWCP for the sale of surplus military equipment, including a full-sized billiard table which was on view at the NAAFI at Golden Hill Fort. On 30th June of that year, it was reported that a reply from War Office in connection with disposal of GHF was read to a meeting of the General Purposes and Public Health committee of IWRDC on Tues. The Clerk had notified the War Department of the Council's interest in acquiring some of the property and had asked for the opportunity to negotiate before it was placed on open market. The War Department replied that 71 acres were redundant and that War Office Central had stated that the property had to be sold in open competition.

A comic occasion was reported in the IWCP on 21st September 1963, when a Freshwater woman was amused on the bus to hear the man in seat behind her pointing out GHF to his wife and describe it as Carisbrooke Castle. She was even more amused when the couple seated in front of her disagreed and said that it was a chicken farm as huts were broiler houses.

Between 5th October 1963 and 18th January 1964, an advert for sale of the Military Hospital GH on 22nd January 1964, appeared in the IWCP with the auctioneers, Morris and Ledger, describing the 20 rooms and "pleasant detached cottage".

On 23rd November 1963 it was reported that the IW County Planning Committee recommended that the vacant land to south of the Fort be included in Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) order for public recreation.

On 25th January 1964 a report was printed in the IWCP on the sale by auction at the Wheatsheaf Hotel in of the War Department property at GHF. It was reported that the IW RDC had paid £20,000 for the terrace of 12 cottages formerly married quarters of the deserted GHF. Mr R Scott of Colwell Bay acting on behalf of a company paid £10,500 for

former Military hospital and porters lodge containing 3.98 acres with planning consent for use as boarding or guest house, residential club or hotel or residential development.

The Rural District Council held a public meeting which was attended by 300 people and reported in the IWCP on 15th February 1964. The Deputy County Planning Officer talked about the plan for a spectacular land and sea park between Freshwater Yay and Yarmouth and also about the possibility of the Council acquiring GHF for 2-3 small light industries.

On 25th March it was reported that the RDC Housing Committee had met private session to discuss a confidential report of proposals for acquisition and disposal of War Department property at GHF.

Unfortunately, the vacant Fort buildings also attracted unwanted attention. On 28th March 1964, the IWCP reported that police were investigating the theft of half a ton of lead from the roof of the medical inspection room at GHF valued at £25.

On 27th June 1964 the RDC report on finances noted that former married quarters at GHF now known as numbers 1-12 St Barnabas (after patron saint of RA), Monk's Lane Freshwater.

On 3rd October 1964, it was reported that the Isle of Wight Council had purchased GHF from the War Department for £40k and immediately sold properties on site to Millway Engineering Ltd from Slough. It reports that Mr A G Haber Managing Director and Mr AAW Currie (co-Director) were moving into two of the officers' houses off Heathfield Road in next few days. Alterations were being made to School of Gunnery which being joined to the nearby NAAFI building to provide the factory with the great arched doorway leading from the School to the parade ground to be filled in. It was reported that 7 acres of adjacent land was designated for light industry and the old stable near Norton Green was also available for use as a small factory. Another 6 acres of land adjacent to Heathfield Rd was set aside for residential development and 60 acres of land around the Fort would be preserved by the IW County Council as a public open space. Old Soldier Mr C S George on holiday from Jersey witnessed the key handing over ceremony. Mr George had been stationed at GHF with E Company of DCLI in 1928 and, by happy coincidence the Hon Mrs E Kindersley County Councillor who carried out the ceremony had been a volunteer worker in the canteen at the same time.

On 17th October 1964, it was reported that Millway Engineering Ltd had sold the fort itself to Mr G A Weeks a well-known Freshwater haulage and building contractor. He moved his depot and Headquarters from Hooke Hill to the Fort. Millway were converting the old gunnery school and NAAFI block into a modern light engineering works.

Auctioneer's notices of the December 2nd auction of huts and buildings at were posted in the IWCP in November and on 5th December it was reported that the sale of timber huts from the site had taken place. held by Pittis and Son at GHF weds.

Golden Hill Country Park

By 1965, the future of the open space at GHF was discussed by the County Planning Committee and on 3rd April 1965, it was reported that the Rural District Council's General Purposes and Public Health Committee had agreed to negotiate with the County Council for acquisition of 35 acres of scrubland at GHF for public open space Mr F E Munson said it was no longer open space as it had become overgrown with gorse. On 8th May the RDC had learned that the County Council wanted £1500 for land at Golden Hill Fort.

Freshwater Parish council had been involved in the future of Golden Hill for many years and on 13th April 1968 it was reported that the future of the open countryside at GH was discussed at annual parish meeting. Towards the end of 1967 the Parish Council decided to ask a qualified forestry consultant to prepare an initial plan for the conversion of the area into a public parkland. The consultant Mr R J Street's proposal for a long-term scheme, taking several years to complete, was adopted and voluntary contributions were started by the donation of 1 guinea by Mrs Isa MacDonald of Rockstone cottage, Colwell Chine. On 6th July 1968 W Mrs H Graddon (clerk to Freshwater PC) reported that the planning permission had now been received for the scheme for a recreation area at GH and that arrangements were being made for the 1st meeting of the GH ad hoc Committee later that month.

On 21st September 1968 it was reported that 60 wasteland acres of scrub and brambles were being transformed into a public park. The state of the land at that time was reported to be a wilderness of derelict land with evidence of unauthorised dumping and burning, poachers, motorbikes, tractors and lorry activity. The plan for the public park included a ban on all vehicles, a car park, planting of groups of trees, including a screening planting around the Fort with a belt of fast-growing conifers, ringed vistas, an imposing entrance from Norton Green down and tree lined avenue with laburnum, limes and walnut trees and an extensive network of paths.

The man leading the public park project was Mr Harry C Chandler of Amos Hill who had been Chairman of Freshwater Parish Council when the park plan was started and who happened to be the grandfather of one of our Volunteers, Caroline Dudley.

Mr Chandler was born in Norton and educated at the RC School in Totland and was a lifelong member of St Saviour's Church and a school governor. Caroline remembers that he had been stationed at the Needles Battery as a Sergeant in World War II and his wife and 2 children had lived in Totland. After the war, he was sent to Wales to train as a carpenter and, as well as serving on Freshwater Parish Council, she remembers him working as a jobbing gardener. Mr Chandler had been a company director of a property development firm and for several years he had a grocery and greengrocer's shop in Moa Place, Freshwater.

Mr Chandler chaired the Golden Hill Park Committee and was interviewed in the IWCP a number of times including 21st September 1968 when he outlined the plans for the park and asked for public donations of funds, trees, wire and volunteer help with the maintenance. The Golden Hill Country Park Ad Hoc Committee included many local organisations including Freshwater Parish Council, Freshwater Women's Institute, the Girl Guides and Boy Scouts, the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England, the IW Ramblers, West Wight Secondary School, West Wight Rotary Club, Freshwater and Totland Agricultural Association and West Wight Business Association. This creation of the Golden Hill Country Park really was a superb effort from the local community.

1969 to 1984

Golden Hill Country Park

On 7th June 1969, the IWCP showed a photograph of Mr Chandler inspecting one of the young birch trees planted along the avenue leading to the car park.

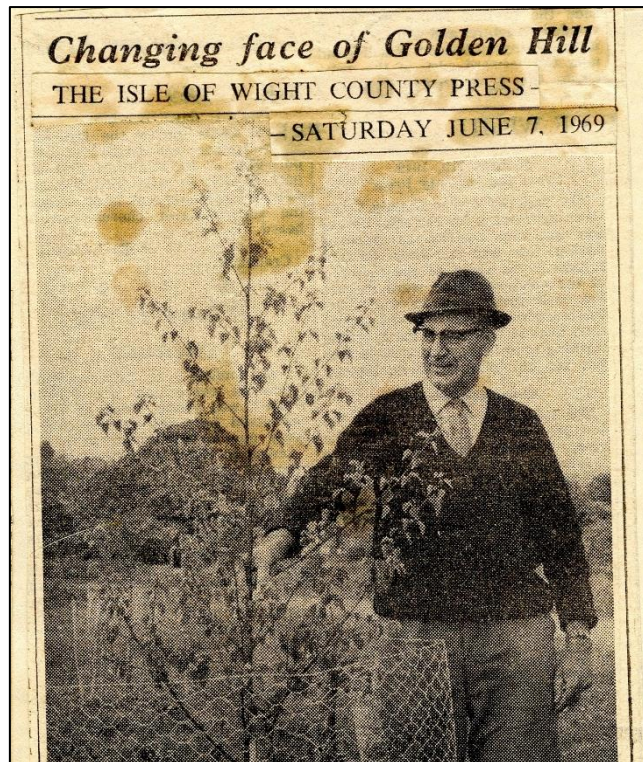


Figure 17: Harry Chandler at GHCP 1969 from IWCP

On 7th March 1970 the IWCP reported that Mr Chandler hoped that the opening of Golden Hill Country Park could take place that year, which was the European Year of Conservation and that he hoped that Earl Mountbatten of Burma, Governor of the Isle of Wight, would be able to perform the opening ceremony.

On 11th July 1970 the IWCP reported on the opening ceremony which was indeed performed by Earl Mountbatten as Harry Chandler had hoped.



Figure 18: Lord Mountbatten opening GHCP July 1970 from IWCP

On 24th November 1973, the IWCP reported that a seat had been donated to Golden Hill Country Park by the West Wight branch of the Royal Artillery Association as a tribute to the gunners who had worked at the Fort in the past.

On 16th October 1977 the same newspaper published a letter from the Chairman of Freshwater Parish Council appealing for financial and practical help to deal with the aftermath of a “raging gorse fire” which had swept through Golden Hill Park in August and “destroyed nearly half of the trees and shrubs and gorse, leaving large areas of blackened stumps and devastation”. The Council had decided to clear the burnt areas to create new vistas.

Light Industries at Golden Hill

As well as industries like Readers and Martin J Palmer Ltd who made wigs within the Fort building itself, there were moves by South Wight Council to zone parts of the land around it for light industrial use in the 1980s. On 4th June 1982, the IWCP reported that Freshwater Parish Council and residents objected to this zoning in the West Wight District Plan. On 24th June 1983, it was reported that opposition was presented to the Public Inquiry into the District Plan about this matter from Freshwater Parish Council, the Isle of Wight Society and over 160 local residents who had formed a Friends of Golden Hill Park group.

1984 to 2002

Golden Hill Fort Tourist attraction

The restoration of the interior of the Fort itself began in 1984 and it was opened as a tourist attraction, including a cafe and a museum, in 1985 (Cantwell, 1985). On 1st March 1985, the IWCP published a letter from the Member of Parliament, Mr Stephen Ross, congratulating Mr G J W Brown, General Manager of Golden Hill Fort, on the progress of the Fort’s development as a museum and craft centre. He stated that 9 new jobs had been created so far which would rise to 25 and that the 1st phase of the work was due to be completed by May 1st with 40 rural craft units, an exhibition area, café, gift shop, children’s play area, rooftop viewing gallery and the Lord Palmerston Bar. The development was costing around £350,000 and it was hoped that it would bring 40,000 visitors to the West Wight a year.

Local opposition to the proposed extension to the car park was voiced in the IWCP during 1985 and was answered by Mr W T Perkins the owner who stated that he had paid for the existing car park and the widening of the military road and that over 55,000 visitors had come to the Fort during its first summer season.

On 2nd May 1986, the grand opening of the Lord Palmerston Pub within the Fort was announced. The joint licensees were Mr Gareth Brown, General Manager of GHF, and Mr Bruce Pasquire, the Bar Manager. An hourly bus service was provided by Southern Vectis from Yarmouth and it was a Free House. At that time more than 30 craft tenants were operating within the Fort including book binding, furniture making, weaving, glass-blowing and painting with Sunday concerts and Country and Western evenings.

The car park extension issue rumbled on through the 1980s with the IWCP reporting on 14th November 1986 that Freshwater Parish Council was seeking legal advice to challenge it.

On 14th August 1987, Mr W T Perkins wrote a letter to the local residents in the IWCP asking for more support from the Council and residents for his venture. But it appears that this support was not forthcoming as when the craft centre and museum venture failed, the Fort was left derelict.

Golden Hill Fort raves

During the 1990s several “Raves” were held at the fort with letters in the IWCP on 23rd August 1991 from local residents complaining about the noise. A video of the rave held

inside the fort on 17th August 1991 is available on You Tube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSIgPhloC6U>

On 4th September 1992 the IWCP reported that the names and telephone numbers of the South Wight Borough Councillors who approved the raves had been put up on village notice board for anyone who wanted to object to the noise. The same edition reported that plans for a nightclub within the fort had been rejected

On 12th February 1996 the IWCP reported that the manager of GHF had been arrested in a dawn raid for allowing drugs to be used during the rave and that weapons had been found

Golden Hill Fort Heron Leisure

By 13th June 1997 a new company, Heron Leisure had taken over Golden Hill Fort and as well as the Sirius nightclub, they planned a series of “edutainment” activities including The Experience Bistro, a room for quiet meditation, a children’s fun factory, a 60-seat cinema, 40 shops and an exhibition of the Isle of Wight Pop Festival.

2002 to 2021

In 2002 the fort was put on the market for £800,000 and on 7th November 2003, the IWCP reported that it had been bought by Roxton Investments and was being renovated and converted into 18 individual apartments.

In 2010, the IWCP published adverts for the new luxury flats and on 27th April 2012, it reported that Golden Hill Homes, the company which had developed the flats had won one of the Isle of Wight Society’s conservation awards for sympathetic design and construction bringing new life to historic buildings on the Island.

In 2016, Gift to Nature, the Island’s countryside management charity took over the management of Golden Hill Country Park on behalf of the Isle of Wight Council. In the summer of 2019, Gift to Nature commissioned the current heritage project, as part of a wider National Lottery Heritage Funded environmental project to enhance the natural and historic environment of the Country Park. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns of 2020 reduced the amount of work that our local community volunteers could complete, but they have done an amazing job in the production of this report.

Information about the project is available on the Gift to Nature website at: <https://gifttonature.org.uk/discover/the-wild-west-wight/golden-hill-country-park/>

People associated with Golden Hill

Military Personnel and Civilian Staff

By Richard Matthews

Golden Hill Fort (Residents)

Golden Hill Fort occupies a prominent position overlooking much of the land west, east and South, towards Afton Down, and is a local landmark. In 1862, the War Department bought an extensive area of poor grassland and rough gorse, on which to build the Fort and cleared the surrounding vegetation to allow an uninterrupted and free field of fire all around for some distance.

Unfortunately, concise records of the individual members of the Armed forces, or indeed Civilians, who lived within the confines of the Fort and grounds have not been traced, and

quite possibly no longer exist. However, thanks to a National Census taken every 10 Years since 1801, it has been possible to establish that The Royal Artillery were resident in the immediate locality at the time of the 1861 Census and presumably were the first to occupy the fort once construction was completed in 1863. They were certainly in occupation between the year's 1871 & 1891. The Royal Garrison Artillery is then recorded as the resident in 1901 & 1911.

Military personnel included; Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers, Gunner's, Trumpeters, Bombardiers and Surgeons and whilst most originated from England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, some were born as far afield as Canada and India.

Other civilian personnel included; a Canteen Steward, an Officer's Mess Butler, Servant's and a Cook.

A few of the soldiers had their wives and children living with them. Some of the children were born whilst their fathers were deployed at the fort. The records of All Saints Church, Freshwater has revealed that a large number of Children of Army Personnel were baptised in the Church. A transcript of the 345 Baptisms that took place between 1858 & 1903 can be seen in Appendix No 25. Unfortunately, the project timescale did not allow analysis of the Register for subsequent years. Likewise, it would have been nice to have had time to identify the Marriages of Army Personnel at the Church.

A breakdown (by number) of those living within the immediate locality (1861) and the Fort compound (1871 – 1911) at the time of each Census is as follows:

	Officers	NCO's	Other Ranks	Civilians	TOTAL
1861 Census - 7 th April	2	2	54	7	65
1871 Census - 2 nd April	1	7	112	15	135
1881 Census - 3 rd April	4	10	83	46	143
1891 Census - 5 th April	5	13	108	33	159
1901 Census - 31 st March	1	20	194	31	246
1911 Census - 2 nd April	5	12	134	0	151

Figure 19: GHF military residents in 1861 to 1911 censuses

A transcript of the Fort residents for each Census Return is recorded under Appendix No's. 1-6

Pen pictures (short biographies) of the following Officers are recorded under Appendix No's. 7-12

1861 Census (Appendix No. 7)

CHILDS, Joseph Clarke

Major – Royal Artillery

1871 Census (Appendix No. 8)

LITTLE, Francis Lawrence Gore

Captain – Royal Artillery

1881 Census (Appendix No.9)

LOGAN, Alfred

Captain – Royal Artillery

NAPIER, Alfred Gerard

Lieutenant – Royal Artillery

WYNELL-MAYOW, Mayow

Captain – Royal Artillery

1891 Census (Appendix No.10)

ELLERSHAW, Arthur

2nd Lieutenant - Royal Artillery

HARDMAN, Reginald Stanley

2nd Lieutenant - Royal Artillery

SCOTT, Archibald Galbraith
 SYMONDS, George Davy
 WILLIS, Edward Henry

Captain – Royal Artillery
 Lieutenant – Royal Artillery
 2nd Lieutenant - Royal Artillery

1901 Census (Appendix No.11)

WALPOLE, John Robsart

2nd Lieutenant - Royal Lancashire Artillery

1911 Census (Appendix No. 12)

ALEXANDER, William Dallis Captain – Royal Garrison Artillery
 CAMPBELL, Keith Gordon Captain – Royal Garrison Artillery
 CHAPMAN, Anthony William Lieutenant – Royal Garrison Artillery
 MOORE, William Agnew Lieutenant – Royal Garrison Artillery
 ROBINSON, Thomas Arthur Frank Captain – Royal Garrison Artillery

Freshwater, Norton Green & Totland (Residents)

Not all of the soldiers lived in the Fort. The Census records show that some Army personnel lived with their families in the local villages of Freshwater, Norton Green & Totland. They included higher ranking Officers, who were billeted with their families and in some cases with servants.

One of those high-ranking officers was a Lieutenant Colonel Lothian NICHOLSON (Royal Engineers), who on the 20th June 1859 was promoted to 1st Captain of The Corp & stationed on The Isle of Wight, where he was employed in the construction of defences of the Solent. At the time of the 1861 Census, he was a resident of Freshwater. In later life he became Lieutenant Governor of Jersey, and subsequently Commander in Chief of Gibraltar (See Appendix No: 19).

Over the years it appears that a lot of Retired Army personnel also took up residence in the villages. A breakdown (by number) of the Army personnel living in Freshwater, Norton Green & Totland villages at the time of each Census is as follows:

	Officers	NCO's	Other Ranks	Fort - Civilian Employees	Wives	Children	Servants	Retired Army Personnel	TOTAL
1861 Census 7 th April	5	1	0	0	4	15	11	0	36
1871 Census 2 nd April	5	2	3	0	9	14	9	0	42
1881 Census 3 rd April	4	1	6	0	21	32	13	4	81
1891 Census 5 th April	4	7	6	1	14	24	5	1	62
1901 Census 31st March	40	29	28	15	87	187	45	8	439
1911 Census 2 nd April	18	29	44	5	99	186	57	28	466

Figure 20: Army personnel living in Freshwater, Norton Green and Totland in 1861 to 1911 censuses.

Transcripts of the details of Military Personnel living in the villages for each Census Return are recorded in Appendices No's:13 – 18.

Pen pictures of the following Officers are recorded under Appendices No's. 19-24.

1861 Census (Appendix No.19)

BOUCHIER, Eustace Fane
BURROWS, Arthur George
NICHOLSON, Lothian

Lieutenant Colonel – Royal Engineers
Colonel – Royal Artillery
Lieutenant Colonel – Royal Engineers

1871 Census (Appendix No. 20)

COATES, Charles
FIELD, George Thomas
MURRAY, Henry Stewart
ROOKE, William
WALLER, William Noel

Captain – 99th Regiment of Foot
Colonel – Royal Artillery
Lieutenant – Royal Artillery
Captain – Royal Artillery
Captain – Royal Artillery

1881 Census (Appendix No.21)

BERTHON, Thomas
MONTIFIORE, Emanuel
SMITH, Mansfeldt, George
SMITH, Rowland
TOMLINSON, William Winslow

Lieutenant Colonel – Royal Artillery (Retired)
Major – Royal Artillery
Lieutenant Colonel – Bengal Staff Corp
Lieutenant Colonel – Bengal Staff Corp.
Surgeon Major - Royal Army Medical Corp

1891 Census (Appendix No.22)

BIRCH, Downward Percival Lea
STRATFORD, Cecil Vernon Wingfield

Captain – Royal Artillery
Captain – Royal Engineers

1901 Census (Appendix No.23)

AUSTIN, Walter Ferrier
AYLWARD, George Frederick Carter
BLUNDELL, Reginald Seymour Moss
CARRINGTON, Robert Harold
CHETWOOD-AIKEN, Hugh Chetwode

CORSELLIS, Melvyn Hampton

COTTON, Richard Godman 'Temple'
CROWE, Mordant Abingdon Carlisle
DRAKE, Francis Richard
FOGERTY, John Frederick
HEAD, Mark
JACKSON, Landon Dealy
LABALMONDRIERE, Julian Arthur
LINDSAY, James
MARSH, Frank Hale Berwick
MILNE, Herbert Wardlaw

NIXON, Arundel James
PARSONS, James Edmund Bacon
PERRY, Harry Charles
PRAGNELL, George Seabrook Thomas
RAVENHALL, Harold William
SAUNDERS, Arthur Augustus
SCOTT, Charles Darracott
SHAW, Cyril Trevor

SMITH, Arthur Murray
TWISS, Frank Arthur

Captain – Antrim Artillery R L A
2nd Lieutenant – Heavy Vehicles Artillery
Lieutenant – Londonderry Artillery
Lieutenant - Hants & Isle of Wight Artillery
2nd Lieutenant – Prince of Wales Donegal
Artillery Militia (Southern Division)
2nd Lieutenant – Prince of Wales Donegal
Artillery Militia (Southern Division)
Lieutenant Colonel (Retired)
Captain – Royal Artillery
Major Royal Garrison Artillery
Lieutenant – 1st Dorset Volunteer Artillery
Lieutenant, Quartermaster – Royal Engineers
Major – Royal Artillery
Major – Royal Artillery
Captain – Forfar Kincardine Artillery
Major General – Indian Army
2nd Lieutenant - Duke of Connaught's Own Sligo
Royal Garrison Artillery (Militia)
Lieutenant Colonel – Royal Artillery
Major General – Indian Staff Corp
Lieutenant – Royal Engineers
Lieutenant - Militia
Captain – Royal Garrison Artillery
Colonel – Royal Artillery (Retired)
Major – Royal Artillery
2nd Lieutenant - Duke of Connaught's Own Sligo
Royal Garrison Artillery (Militia)
Captain – Royal Garrison Artillery
Captain – Royal Artillery

WALFORD, William Swarder
 WALLER, Robert Jocelyn Rowan
 WIGHT, Ralph Henry Danhurst
 WILLETT, Francis Edward Thomas

Lieutenant Colonel – Royal Artillery
 2nd Lieutenant - Antrim Artillery R L A
 2nd Lieutenant – Londonderry Artillery Militia
 2nd Lieutenant – Heavy Vehicles Artillery

1911 Census (Appendix No. 24)

BURNSIDE, Eustace Augustus
 CLOSE, Frederick Macdonald
 COKE, Basil Elmsley
 CORRIE, William Francis
 EARLE, Henry (Sir)

FRASER, Lyons David
 HOLLAND, Charles Stewart
 HUTCHINSON, Kenneth Douglas
 JENOUR, Arthur Stawell
 JONES, Walter Howel
 KEMBALL, George Vero
 LONGDEN, Arthur Berridge
 MAYNE, John Theophilus Bolton
 MOORSOM, Henry Martin

PRICE, Owen Lloyd
 PRITCHARD, Clive Gordon
 SCOTT, Alexander Francis Sinclair
 SILVER, Walter Barrington
 TOWNS-CLARK, Alexander

WAILES, William Eteson
 WIGHTON, Edward John

Major – Royal Army Medical Corp
 Colonel – Royal Artillery
 Lieutenant – Royal Engineers
 Major – Royal Artillery
 Lieutenant Colonel - Kings Own Yorkshire Light
 Infantry (Retired)
 Major – Royal Artillery
 Captain – Royal Heavy Artillery
 Captain – Royal Garrison Artillery
 Major – Royal Garrison Artillery
 Major – Royal Garrison Artillery
 Brigadier General – Royal Artillery
 Major – Indian Army
 Lieutenant – Royal Artillery
 Hon. Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) and
 Chief Constable of Lancashire (Pensioned)
 Captain – Royal Garrison Artillery
 Captain – Royal Garrison Artillery
 Major – Royal Garrison Artillery
 Major - Royal Irish Fusiliers (Retired)
 Major - The Duke of Cambridge Own
 (Middlesex Regiment) (Retired)
 Major – Royal Garrison Artillery
 Captain – Royal Artillery

This report does not include the occupants of other fortifications situate along the West coast of the island i.e.; Fort Victoria, Fort Albert, Cliff End Battery, Warden Battery, Hatherwood Battery, Needles Battery (Old & New) & Fort Redoubt. However, some of Golden Hill Fort occupants and other Army personnel living in the local villages may have served in one or all of them at some time during their posting.

Military burials

By Richard Matthews

Military burials at All Saints Churchyard, Freshwater

The parish church of All Saints is located in Church Place and forms part of the original village settlement. Of Saxon origin and listed in the *Domesday Survey* of 1086, the church looks out over the head of the tidal estuary of the River Yar.

Churchyard plans and burial records suggest there are in the region of 4,500 graves some double or more and some without markers or monuments. The churchyard has expanded over time with additions in 1870 from Lady Heytesbury (née Holmes), in 1935 from Colonel Cecil Brent-Good, and in 1976 along the north side on glebe land presented by the rector to the Parish Church Council. Glebe is a piece of land serving as part of a clergyman's benefice and providing income.

The War Memorial records the names of 116 parishioners who lost their lives during the First and Second World Wars. Constructed circa 1920 the memorial comprises a chamfered

stone cross with sword and shield on a square battered base and an octagonal Portland stone plinth set on two octagonal stone bases.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Monuments

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is mandated to mark, record and maintain the graves and places of commemoration of Commonwealth military service members who died in the two World Wars. There are 19 Commission graves in the churchyard, 14 related to WWI and 5 to WWII. Eleven Soldiers (Army), four Sailors (Royal Navy), 2 Airman (Royal Air Force), 1 Coast Guard and a member of the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD).

The Army Personnel are:

GOLD, George (Service No: 22806) - Private, 3rd Battalion, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. Died July 2, 1916 aged 17. (Section F, Plot 135).

GRAY, John James Emslie - Second Lieutenant, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. Died March 17, 1917 aged 41. (Section F, Plot 97).

HEGGADON, Joseph (Service No. 34975) - Private, 3rd Battalion, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, stationed at Golden Hill Fort. Died June 5, 1917. (Section F, Plot 142).

JACKSON, Arthur Henry (Service No. 5496488) - Gunner, 101 A A "Z" Battery, Royal Artillery. Died February 21, 1941 aged 26. Inscription reads: "Whereso'er in God's Great Universe You Are Today, God Bless You My Son". (Plot number not listed).

JINKS, William Charles (22870) - Private, 3rd Battalion, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. Died November 15, 1915. (Section F, Plot 67).

LARBALESTIER, Arthur Norman (Service No. 6639) - Private, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. Died May 27, 1916. (Section F, Plot 133).

MERRITT, John (Service No. D/1919) - Corporal, 8th (H D) Battalion Hampshire Regiment. Died May 16, 1940. (Section C, Plot 119).

MILLERSHIP, Archie (Service No: 36216) - Gunner, 33 Company, Royal Garrison Artillery, Died November 18, 1915 aged 25. (Section F, Plot 49).

PARROTT, John Henry (Service No. 1349) - Sapper, 5th Hants Fortress Company, Royal Engineers. Died October 30, 1914 aged 30. (Section A, Plot 579).

SILVER, Walter Barrington – Major – Royal Irish Fusiliers Died: 3rd October 1914, Tyross, Armagh, Northern Ireland. (Plot 3. Block A. Grave 24)

SPARKES, Ernest (Service No. 20176) - Sapper, 22nd Company, Royal Engineers. Died May 3, 1915 aged 24. (Section F, Plot 54).

The following individuals also buried in the Grave yard, had or may have had links to Golden Hill Fort.

ANTROBUS, Herbert - Ex Royal Garrison Artillery. Died July 30, 1944 aged 67. He lived at 3 Jessamine Cottages, Queens Road (Section F5, Plot 486).

DICKINSON, Neville Hope Campbell - D.S.O., Major, Leinster Regiment. Died October 2, 1935. He lived at Redoubt House, Freshwater Bay. His wife, Elizabeth Frankland Dickinson (died July 7, 1955) is buried in the same plot. (Section D7, Plot 617).

FERGUSON, William - Sergeant, Royal Fusiliers, stationed at Golden Hill Fort. Died May 11, 1907 aged 64. Lived at Beedon Villa, High Street, Freshwater. (Section P7, Plot 1472).

GWYOTHER, Percy James Phillips - Master Gunner, Royal Artillery. Died October 27, 1903 aged 43. His address is listed as Hurst Castle. The inscription also memorializes his son, Ralph, who was killed in action in France on August 30, 1917, aged 20. (Section O6, Plot 1379).

HAYCROFT, Thomas William Margetts - Major, Royal Artillery. Died March 31, 1940 aged 57. He is memorialized on "The Old Contemptibles Association Memorial" located at the Calbourne Mill Military Museum recognizing Isle of Wight members of the British Expeditionary Force in WWI. He lived at Barncroft, Colwell. (Section K6, Plot 749).

HOOD, Edward George - Gunner, Royal Artillery. Died June 12, 1885 aged 19. He drowned off Hurst Castle and the headstone was erected by his comrades of 4.1., Southern Division, Royal Artillery. (Section M5, Plot 1302).

SMITH, James - Master Gunner. Died March 6, 1895. (Section N4, Plot 1217).

See Appendix No. 26 for Pen-Pictures of the 18 Soldiers listed above who were buried in the Church Yard of All Saints Church, Freshwater.

Accident at Fort Redoubt

The following captain and three gunners, who were stationed at Golden Hill Fort and killed on June 25, 1901 by an exploding canon during gunnery practice at Fort Redoubt, where also buried at All Saints Church, but research has not revealed enough information about them to produce Pen-Pictures

Le MESURIER, Arthur - Captain, Royal Artillery, aged 33. (Section O5, Plot 1290).

DORMAN, Charles - No. 28 Company, Southern Division, Royal Garrison Artillery, aged 20. (Section O6, Plot 1426).

MacDONALD, Murdoch - 28th Company, Southern Division, Royal Garrison Artillery, aged 23. (Section O6, Plot 1377).

RICKETTS, Charles - No. 28 Company, Southern Division, Royal Garrison Artillery, aged 29. (Section O6, Plot 1430).

Military burials at St Saviours Church (Roman Catholic), Totland (with Commonwealth War Graves Commission Monuments)

There are 8 Commission graves in the churchyard, 7 related to WWI and 1 to WWII. Six Soldiers (Army), and two Sailors (Royal Navy)

The Army Personnel are:

CARROLL, Michael (Service No: 18124) – Battery Quarter Master Sergeant, 253rd Siege Battery -Royal Garrison Artillery. Died on 27th January 1918 (Aged 37).

COOMBES, Dan (Service No. 8161) – Corporal, 3rd Battalion, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. Died 30th May 1916. (Aged 28)

OWENS, John James (Service No. 6383) – Battery Sergeant Major, 1st Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery. Died on 5th January 1920. (Aged 38)

THOMAS, John (Service No. 21116) – Sergeant, 113th Siege Battalion, Royal Garrison Artillery. Died 25th May 1916.

VEITCH, Herbert (Service No: 24292) – Lance Corporal, 3rd Battalion, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. Died 22nd February 1919 (Aged 18)

WEAVER, Charles Edward (Service No. 4850) – Company Sergeant Major, 3rd Battalion, 1st Reserve Brigade, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. Died 4th December 1920. (Aged 38)

See Appendix No. 27 for Pen-Pictures of the 6 Soldiers listed above who were Buried in the Church Yard of St Saviours (R C) Church, Totland.

The 1911 Census and Golden Hill Fort By Sheila Colenutt

Once again Ruth has encouraged me to explore the archaeology and written history of parts of the Isle of Wight. I first worked with her on the Dodnor cement mills project. This like the Golden Hill Heritage project was a National Lottery Heritage Fund funded work to enhance areas managed by Island environmental Charity Gift to Nature.

Having looked through the census for 1911, others researching earlier censuses, I came across upwards of 50 families or single persons connected to the fort during that period. Some personnel are listed as retired so may not be directly connected with the administration of the fort but have been included, as an illustration of just how much impact the personnel at the Fort had on the West Wight area. This is not a comprehensive list but a snapshot of the time.

Living in Yarmouth:

Army Lieutenant Johnson Alexander retired at 37 2 children born on Isle of Wight;
Lt Colonel Henry Earle retired Yorkshire Regiment Living at Norton Lodge;
William Burdett retired army living The Saltings age 71;
Towers Clark Major in Army retired living Braxton Cottage Yarmouth;
Born in India there is Captain Pritchard RGA. Children born IW 1908 and 1909.
George Wadham Army pensioner age 40. Born Ryde IW all direct family island born;
Michael Carroll (who's story is told elsewhere in this report);
Soldier Slieght RGA born Lincolnshire, married island girl, direct family members all island born;

The married quarters list some of those at Golden Hill Fort on the day of the census.
Serg.Major Charles Pine Royal Artillery wife and children not island born. Has as boarders a Major Perkins and Captain Armitage;
Julian A Labalmondoire Colonel Royal Artillery Living in large house with wife, daughter, mother and 3 servants;
Cliff End Battery had 10 soldiers on duty;
Fort Albert 3 soldiers;
Fort Victoria 22 men on duty;

Whilst continuing with own research into my island connections I found the following. Soldier Royal Engineers Fitter R.E George Sutton born Chatham was visiting with wife and 3 children, A William Griffiths of South Street Yarmouth.

It is unclear if they were posted to the fort or were from some posting on the mainland.

A couple of my 1st Cousins twice removed married into island families, namely Pitman and Gattrell. The latter being the names on the Yarmouth war memorial. They being the Brothers-in-Law of my distant cousin William Baker.

Individuals at Golden Hill Fort

The 1890's

Clara Marion Horton

By Caroline Dudley

Clara Marion Horton and her husband, Captain Sydney George Horton, moved to Freshwater from Woolwich in August 1896. Captain Horton was stationed at Golden Hill Fort and he, his wife and their two daughters, his mother and four servants all lived at Freshwater Court. They left the Island in 1901 when Sydney was invalided out of the Army. Sydney died in 1904 and Clara married Major-General Charles Ross the following year. She was widowed again in 1930 and she and her daughter Eileen moved back to the Island and lived at Green Gables in Freshwater Bay. It was Eileen and her mother who suggested that a memorial be erected at Alum Bay to Marconi, whom Clara met on the Island in the late 1890s. Eileen was the honorary secretary of the committee responsible for organising the memorial. Clara (or 'C.M.R.') wrote her memories of life in Freshwater when she was a young officer's wife and they were published in three parts in the *Isle of Wight County Press* in January and February 1937. Clara died in 1949 aged 81.

Here are some excerpts from her memories of life in Freshwater in the 1890s

"We came to Freshwater from Woolwich in August, 1896, and after life in a garrison town the change was extraordinary. Our arrival was somewhat depressing.....The food was tough. The beds were as hard and unyielding as our landlady's religious principles. No food was cooked on Sundays.....At the end of my first day in Freshwater I recollect that I sat sadly on Colwell shore, looking longingly at the mainland, while the tears of an exile rolled slowly down my cheeks.....After a month of life in the Island we discovered that it was the most delightful place in the world. Wonderful hospitality was shown to us by all the residents, and the military society in itself was gay and amusing....In those days [Golden Hill] fort was teeming with soldiers, and Freshwater was a gay and lively spot. Military conversation dwelt on such topics as position, finders, targets, Brennan torpedoes, night firing, submarine mining, and the like, and every fort held its complement of gunners. There was a School of Gunnery, as well as the batteries at Golden Hill."

"On one occasion, when Queen Victoria visited Freshwater Fort, she mistook the master gunner for the officer commanding the troops, and shook hands warmly with him. This was a natural mistake, as the master gunner was an imposing figure, who wore a cockade in his hat. The incident gave him great pleasure."

"Night firing was one of the regular excitements in summer, and no one complained of windows being broken or sleepless nights, as it was "the thing" to go out and watch the performances from the cliffs. Once when a fire broke out at some house in the parish in the night, the gunners at Golden Hill were called out to extinguish it. Determined that if they could not sleep no one else should, they knocked loudly at every door in High-street as they passed."

“In those days everything was more centred around Golden Hill, near which houses and lodgings were always well let...Inside Golden Hill Fort itself quarters were rather crowded. A sergeant with a large family was allotted an extra bed-room, whereupon he promptly took a lodger!”

“There was a wonderful cook in the mess—one Mrs Miller—and once when I was seriously ill with fever, and could not eat anything, she restored me to life with her delicious puddings.”

“The outward aspect of Freshwater has not altered greatly. The village, such as it then was, was squalid and untidy. Lovely old thatched cottages stood cheek by jowl with new and glaring red brick erections and tin sheds. High-street has merely become rather more battered and time worn.”

“In those days morning church was a very lengthy affair, and as I used to walk at least a mile and a half to teach in the Sunday-school at Golden Hill beforehand, and then on to the church, where the length of the sermon was rarely less than 35 minutes, it was somewhat exhausting. The troops attended this long service, and many of them were supposed to have wished to change their religion in order to avoid it!”

“Another spectacular happening was the arrival of some new guns for the Needles Fort. These were taken up via High Down Inn Road, and in some marvellous manner dragged by teams of horses to the top of the down, whence they were conveyed to the fort. I suppose that the existing road to the fort at Alum Bay had not then been made—anyhow that was the route taken.”

The Island in general, and Freshwater in particular, took an active interest in the Boer War, which broke out in 1899, for they sent both Yeomanry and Artillery Militia to the front. The latter were commanded by Major H. Gordon Watson, who had been stationed for some time at Golden Hill.”

The 1900s

Herbert Arthur Condon

Cherry Thompson who lives next to the Country Park kindly allowed us to include information about her grandfather who was stationed at Golden Hill Fort.

Herbert Arthur Condon was born in 1880 in Bermuda and was a soldier with the Royal Artillery. He came to the Island for Queen Victoria's funeral in 1901 from Gosport.

He was stationed at Golden Hill Fort and in 1904 married local girl Elizabeth Jane Morris (daughter of Charles and Elizabeth Morris of Middleton, Freshwater) born in 1884. They are both shown in the photograph on the next page which is the copyright of Mrs Thompson.



Herbert Arthur died in 1962 on the Island and Elizabeth Jane died in 1965

Cherry remembered the Fort in operation and lots of soldiers around, but mostly as a child and not being allowed to enter as it was gated off, the Royal Artillery physical training ground was at the bottom of the hill and Cherry remembers a copse on the site of their current house, and seeing a flasher in the Copse when she was a child.

Cherry and her husband mentioned others whose parents married soldiers and named Taffy Griffiths, Vince Fennell, and Berne Trott who married Beryl Taylor.

Figure 21: Herbert and Elizabeth Condon ©Cherry Thompson

World War 1

Thomas Edward Rendle

Researched by Caroline Dudley



Bandsman Thomas Rendle, of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, was stationed at Golden Hill Fort, Freshwater, Isle of Wight, between 1916 and 1918 at least. Born in Bristol in 1884, he was awarded the Victoria Cross for rescuing wounded comrades from a collapsed trench on the Belgian front under enemy machine gun fire from only 200 yards away.

Aged 29 at the time, Rendle played the tuba in the Band but was assisting in helping injured soldiers to safety out of the trenches at the time.

He is mentioned in an IWCP report on 21st October 1916 as winning the consolation prize at a whist drive held in the Sergeants Mess at GHD. He was initiated into the Needles Masonic Lodge on 2nd August 1916 and was its assistant secretary in 1918. His children, Edward and Ruby, are recorded at the All Saints School in December 1918.

Figure 22: Thomas Rendle

Unknown soldier Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Researched by Caroline Dudley



This postcard of a soldier from the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, most likely serving at Golden Hill Fort was taken by Freshwater photographer Lindsay McLennan who had a shop at Landsdowne, School Green (where Mrs Middleton's bookshop now is) from 1910 to 1918.

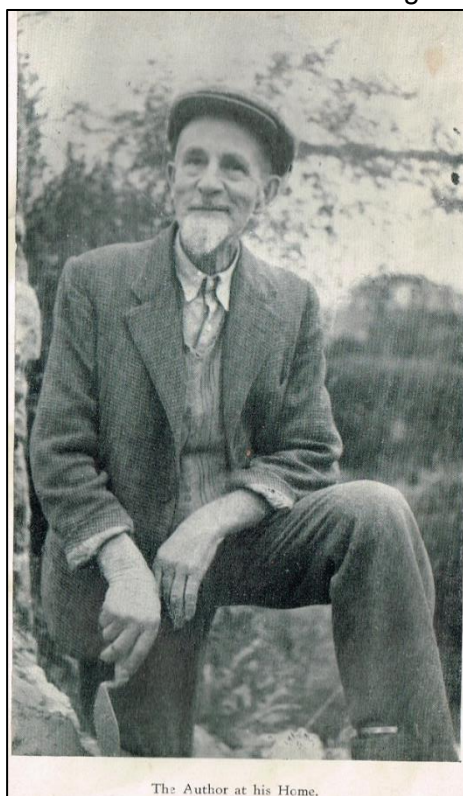
McLennan's studio was destroyed by a stray shell fired from Hurst Castle in 1915, but he was able to continue his work as the studio was in a separate shed.

He was able to use the financial burden of the destruction and the fact that all his workers had left to join the Flying Corps as photographers at a military tribunal in 1917 to avoid being conscripted in to the army.

Figure 23: Lindsay McClennan's postcard

Arthur Williams

Born on the Island and working as a stone mason before the outbreak of World War 1,



The Author at his Home.

Figure 24: Arthur Williams

Arthur gives an account of his time at Golden Hill Fort in his book "Memories from Golden Hill to Jerusalem" published in 1951, when he was "approaching three score years and ten".

In 1917, after convalescing in hospital with trench fever caught in the trenches at the Western Front, Arthur was posted to the draft-finding Depot at Golden Hill. He says that "thanks to plenty of fresh air and training by regular instructors of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry...we felt once again on top of the world."

He describes how his stay at Golden Hill Fort coincided with the height of the submarine menace, when the country had only a reserve of six weeks food supply. "Our daily rations were just enough to keep body and soul together...The complaint of masses of hungry men led the Messing Officer to give us a lecture, with the exhibit of a soldier's daily ration on a table in front of him. This seemed to us to be about half enough for one meal for a hungry man. He went into great detail to explain how by juggling methods known only to Messing Officers and Army Cooks, how they made ends meet. Considering that at that time my pay was seven pence per day, out of which I managed to get a supper for six pence, also a few pints of wallop, I guess my budgeting was the work of a conjuror." Arthur left Golden Hill in late summer on his way to Alexandria in Egypt.

Alfred Brown

Gill Kennett provided us with some information about her grandfather, Alfred Brown, born in Dudley and who was in the Royal Warwickshires stationed at Golden Hill after returning from



India: "He was born in 1885 and died in Freshwater in 1966. This photo is taken in India and you can see he is wearing his Queen Victoria cup medals for target shooting.

We have his medals including the North West Frontier medal and his cap badge. He was a sharpshooter and won the Queen Victoria Cup for Shooting two years consecutively (I have a photo of him wearing the medals) and when I was born, he sent my parents a silver spoon that he won in 1908 at the Bengal and Punjab Rifle Association in Meerut India for hitting a 4-inch bull at 1000 yards - I have the original letter and the spoon.

He then came to the Island with his regiment where he met my grandmother Cecilia who lived in Norton Cottage with her parents, they married and had 8 children.

Figure 25: Alfred Brown ©Gill Kennett

After WW1 he became a postman and lived up The Avenue and was also a Drill Sergeant for the Home Guard during WW2. My grandmother was the Standard Bearer for the local British Legion, 4 of her sons, including my dad, were heavily involved in WW2 and all came home. In his eighties my grandfather could still shoot a threepenny bit with an air gun off a post at his garden."

Soldiers at the Drill Hall 1914-1916

Helen Wood has kindly provided us with a photograph taken of soldiers in the Drill Hall for some kind of an event (possibly watching a newsreel?) in Freshwater in either 1914 or 1916. Originally published on the Freshwater and Totland Archive Group's website, we have no names for any of the soldiers pictured.



Figure 26: Soldiers at the Drill Hall Freshwater 1914/1916. ©Helen Wood reproduced with permission from Helen Wood from her grandmother's photograph collection

1920s

Royal Ulster Rifles

A report on the annual sports meeting of the Royal Ulster Rifles in the Portsmouth Evening News of 5th June 1923 mentions the following soldiers at Golden Hill Fort. Lieutenant-Colonel E G Dunn commanding the 1st Ulster Rifles, No 5 Squadron trained by Sergeant Alcock, Lieutenant G L Weekes, Corporal Bell and Riflemen Smallwood, McCann, McWilliams, McMaster, Fee and Calvert.

A photograph of the Ulster Rifles at Golden Hill Fort appeared in the Ballymena Weekly newspaper on 21st July 1923. The report mentions Rifleman Quigg VC and the Commanding Officer Major H R Goodman.



Figure 27: Royal Ulster Rifles at Golden Hill 1923

World War 2

Mrs Marion Preece

Interviewed by Jackie and Graham Field 10th February 2020

I was born in Freshwater in 1932 and lived at Middleton Cottage near the Briary. There were two boys and three girls in the family and our last name was Oliver. My father Herbert ("Jack") was born in Freshwater in 1900 and married Margaret Elliot who came from a Dorset farming family.

I attended Weston School and then the Middle School in Freshwater. When I was fourteen, I got a job as trainee bookkeeper in Shanklin and travelled there and back by bus every day. With the journey the days seemed very long. Later on, I got a job as a cashier with Jordan and Stanley, purveyor of high-quality wines, spirits and groceries in Totland with sawdust on the floors.

My husband also came from Freshwater and was in the army but never stationed locally. He was a Weapons Instructor with R.E.M.E [Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers] and served in Malaya, Hong Kong, Bahrain with the Gurkhas, and was injured in Palestine. He invented a gun part that was put into production.

I accompanied my husband on most of his army travels with my daughter Janice and son Vince. Janice was ten when we finally came home and she now lives on Camp Road in Freshwater. After my husband retired, we ran Lane's Inn at the Totland Chalet Hotel until it closed and became the site of Lanes End Estate.

As a young man my grandfather Charles Oliver worked as a waterman in London and used to ferry Lord Tennyson and his family and friends about. Tennyson asked my grandfather to come and work for him at Farringford which he did as a caretaker. He moved with his wife Emily to Middleton Cottage which they later shared with my family. They lived at one end and we lived in the other. There were 14 rooms in the cottage which has now been greatly modernised. The long orchard and back garden were later sold and built on.

During the First World War my father wanted to enlist like his brother but he was only fifteen. His grandfather wanted him to start an apprenticeship but he disappeared one day and was later found in Germany. He must have lied about his age and enlisted anyway but was promptly returned home.

During the Second World War my father worked as an ARP [Air Raid Precautions] Warden, ambulance driver and postman. The wardens supervised the blackout and had to make sure that no lights were showing. My grandfather also worked as an ARP Warden and auxiliary policeman. The local ARP Wardens and ambulance services were headquartered where the Conservative Club is now. They used to repair army lorries and other vehicles behind the club as well.

It was so different in Freshwater during the war. I remember tanks and Bren gun carriers driving through the streets and up to the Needles Battery. There were no lights at night and all the street names had been removed. You couldn't go to the beaches which were completely shut off with barbed wire and other defences. Soldiers were everywhere. I remember there was an air raid shelter by the Tennyson cottages on Moons Hill and another one on Summers Lane. The forts and batteries like Golden Hill were strictly off limits with gates and sentries. The soldiers used to come down to the village a lot and were quite a presence there.

Totland Bay Hotel was used as a military hospital and you could see the patients sitting outside. Some seemed to have been quite badly injured. The petrol station in Totland was a munitions factory where my eldest sister worked. She also worked as a counter assistant at Freshwater Post Office and in the evenings at the cinema ticket office.

There were German prisoners of war at Fort Warden and Brambles and they rode bicycles out to work in the local market gardens. They had orange diamonds on their backs to identify them. There were also Italian prisoners of war at Fort Victoria. A lot of the locals resented the fact that they had so much freedom while the war was still on and they also got the front three rows at the cinema. Some of them married local girls.

After the war the Waterborne Division of the Royal Army Service Corps moved into Golden Hill Fort as a training facility. One of my brothers was stationed at the fort. I went to one dance there but that was the only time. Some local people would go more often and some local girls later married soldiers. I had a couple of friends who did.

When Golden Hill Fort closed some of the outbuildings were reused in the village like the old Ginger Jar on School Green Road, the single storey building behind Moa Place and one of the outbuildings at Sheepwash Farm.

Royal Army Service Corps Water Transport Training Company

Richard Wilson

Lynne Copping provided us with information about her father who joined the RASC in 1950 and transferred to Golden Hill in the 1950s.

"My father, Richard George Wilson, came from a military family. He joined the army in 1942, a year underage, and in February 1944 applied for pilot training to join the Glider Pilot Regiment. In September 1944, aged 19, he flew a glider into Arnhem and was one of the lucky few who returned home after the battle. He transferred to a couple of regiments after the war, and while in Egypt in 1950 he joined the RASC. I was born in Egypt, as was my younger brother, and in November 1951 my mother and her three young children were evacuated by troopship with only one days' notice, leaving my father behind.

He returned in 1953 and sometime soon after that we were posted to Fort Victoria on the IOW and lived in one of the tiny old cottages next to the fort. We lived there for a year or two and then my father must have transferred to Golden Hill and we lived in the married quarters in Monks Lane (in the terrace that has been pulled down). You can see the style of houses in the remaining terrace that is still there.

I don't exactly know what my father did there but I have been told that he commanded the small boat, the Dickens Class 'Uriah Heap'. My father always stood out in photographs because of the pilot's wings on his uniform, most unusual for a man in the RASC.

We moved from the IOW to Milldam Barracks in Portsmouth before going to Singapore in May 1958 and again in November 1963. We returned to Portsmouth in June 1966.

My father came out of the army (the RASC became the RCT in 1965) in January 1969 as a Warrant Officer 1st Class. My three brothers joined the army and I joined the WRAF.

Lynne has very kindly allowed us to use the photograph below of the RASC Water Transport team at Golden Hill Fort in 1955. Her father, Dick Wilson is 5th from the left on the 2nd row from the front.



Figure 28: RASC Water Transport Training company at GHF 1955 ©Lynne Copping

Other possible identifications for soldiers in this photograph suggested from posts on the Isle of Wight Heritage Facebook page are:

Sergeant May (small blonde soldier) 2nd right in middle row; Alec Penney front row 4th from left; Dick "Tug" Wilson 1st left front row; Sergeant Coulthart; Alex Hastings, Sergeant McDairmud; CSM Jefferies; RSM Johnny Brack 4th from right; RSM Sinclair? Geoff Hurren 2nd row 3rd from right.

Lynne also provided us with a photograph of the RASC Water Transport soldiers on parade at Golden Hill Fort in 1955:



Figure 29: RASC Water Transport Training company at GHF 1955 ©Lynne Copping

Vince Fennell

By Caroline Dudley

Vince is currently a Totland Parish Councillor and was interviewed by Caroline Dudley for this project on 31st October 2019. Vince came from Newport in Wales to the Island in 1960/61 in the Water Transport Training Company, R.A.S.C. He did seamanship training at Fort Victoria. One group did seamanship training and the other marine engineering.

He went out in the *Yarmouth Navigator* during training. They nicknamed it '*The Plonk*' as it went up and down like a yo-yo. When they were proficient enough, they would sail to Guernsey on training cruises.

Despite doing all this training, Vince was given the job of driver and drove a range of different vehicles. They had to do sport at Cliff End. Vince didn't enjoy this.

Vince met his wife, Shirley Gosden, in Freshwater and they married at All Saints' Church in 1964.

Vince mentioned several names of those who had been in charge: The Commanding Officer at that time was Major C.F.C. Dunford Wood, D.F.C. Men were punished by being given extra duties. Major John Finch was the last Commanding Officer at Golden Hill. He was later on the Freshwater Parish Council, was mayor of South Wight and in the British Legion.

He remembers the Officers' Mess was at Solent Hill, the hospital was near the current car park and the NAAFI was in the RVN building.

He lived in the barracks at Golden Hill. The barracks were wooden huts. There were around eight or nine of them and they were like dormitories with beds along the sides. They had wooden roofs as well as wooden walls. The kitchen had a corrugated iron roof and was at the top end of the wooden huts. After Golden Hill he had to go to Arden in Germany. He didn't like it here as he saw men being killed.

Vince was a regular soldier for 9 years and then served in the Territorial Army and finally joined the local Army Cadet Force as Troop Sergeant in 1976 before becoming Commanding Officer of the West Wight ACF. The IWCP report on the disbanding of the RASC Unit at Golden Hill and Fort Victoria on 24th February 1962 reports that some 1500 soldiers had qualified in seamanship and navigation and more than 1000 had qualified as marine engineers through the RASC's time in the West Wight.

Private Ian Lennie

Interviewed by Fiona Johnstone

Private Lennie joined the Royal Army Service Corps in 1961, at the age of 21. After his initial training in Aldershot, he was sent to Golden Hill for trade training as a marine engineer.

He has fond memories of his arrival. The new recruits were deposited in Farnborough at 11.00am and told to find their way to Golden Hill. After a long journey they eventually arrived in Yarmouth at 11.00pm. They decided a pint was needed in the Kings Head and then they contacted the Fort who set a truck to pick them up. Hungry, they asked if it was possible to have anything to eat so the cook was raised from his bed and the new recruits were treated to a huge fry-up. A good start to life in Golden Hill.

A typical day for Private Lennie involved parade in the fort at 0800 hours. He and the other trainees were then taken to Fort Victoria for trade training in marine engineering. They would return to Golden Hill for lunch and then back to Fort Victoria for the afternoon. After the evening meal their time was their own. Many of the soldiers would go to the New Inn in Norton Green. Indeed, on Wednesday afternoons when the soldiers had PE training in the gym (housed near the stable block) they would occasionally slip through the window and hop over the gate for a swift pint. The pub would be phoned by a lookout if the duty officer was on the prowl. Another popular attraction was the cinema in Freshwater but soldiers wishing to stay on site could use the NAAFI.

Private Lennie was born on the Isle of Wight and had strong family connections so he would spend most weekends at home in Ryde. Occasionally, the soldiers would head to Newport for a Saturday night out.

A soldier who misbehaved or turned out in an untidy uniform would have to join the guard orderly and keep 'Big Bertha' alight. This large boiler was used to heat the accommodation billets and parts of the fort. In addition, the Sergeant's quarters and officer's mess had top hat stoves which also needed to be kept alight. Unfortunately, Big Bertha's hut was warm and cosy with a comfortable armchair and it was all too easy to fall asleep. A young soldier would be in serious trouble if the heaters went out and was often seen in the dead of night racing between the buildings with a shovel full of glowing coals taken from Big Bertha in order to relight the cold stoves.

Private Lennie was in the last garrison troupe to use the both forts. In March 1962 he and the other trainees were involved in the final parade. They left Golden Hill Fort for the last time dressed in their No.1 uniforms and gathered at Fort Victoria. VIPs including the local

MP and councillors attended the final inspection and the soldiers marched out to 'Waiting for the Wagon' played by the regimental corps band. They were the last garrison troupe on the Island, their operation moved to Gosport.

Private Lennie remained in the army for nine years and then went on to have several successful careers first as a blacksmith, then as a publican and finally as an engineer for the prison service.

The 1960s to present day

Terry Noyce

Terry has volunteered with our heritage project from the start and worked extremely hard on the archaeological investigation of the military structures on site. Living near Golden Hill Fort all his life, he has also kindly recorded some of his memories of the Fort.

"Aged about five, I went to Golden Hill Fort open day with my father. We entered the Fort and went up onto the metal balustrade. The square below had a small white circle painted in the centre. We threw pennies at the circle to try to win some money by getting a coin in the circle (we did not win any money).

As we left the Fort, I saw soldiers laying the coins end to end down the middle of the road. We went down the road towards Norton Green. There were Nissen huts at the side of the road. The huts had coal stacked at one end which had been white washed. The roadside was lined with stones painted white.

We left Golden Hill and went to Victoria House, the house of my grandfather Bob Crisp in Norton Green.

I remember my brother and I (aged about 8 and 5) using the army assault course at the Fort. We used to crawl through the S-shaped tunnel. It was dark and the bottom was covered in mud. I used to swing and climb the ropes.

In the early 1970's I worked for George Weeks' transport company. George rented areas within the Fort, and I remember taking lorries there for refuelling and washing down.

George Weeks

Volunteer Terry Noyce worked with George Weeks, the local haulage and building contractor who bought the fort in 1964. Although Mr Weeks died in 1981, his son posted a video dated 28th September 2020 on You Tube in memory of his father and those who worked for him. The link to the video is below and his Golden Hill Fort depot is shown at approx. 24 minutes from the start of the video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5ypQP8xQc8>

John Awty

Interviewed by Terry Noyce

Mr Awty's father's company (T A Awty & Son) held a contract to maintain on a weekly basis the Fort clock, facing the square, from 1927 to 1962.

He remembers that the sewers from the Fort went down to Norton Green, were pumped up to the church, then gravity fed to Black Rock holding tanks. When nearly full they were emptied on an outgoing tide.

The Fort was used in between the Wars for summer camp and the NAAFI Shop was in the moat. A fire engine was kept off Heathfield Road in a wooden shed.

Cliff End was for gun practice and Mr Awty's mother and other ladies used the Fort for rifle practice. There was a Helipad to the east of the Fort and he remembers that the current RVN buildings was used as wagon sheds. One large building with gable ends (on the left) was taken down but he does not know what happened to the stone blocks.

Gary Mowle

Interviewed by Sheila Colenutt and Josephine Hinson 20th September 2019

Gary Mowle is a cabinet maker and furniture restorer. He started his professional career within Golden Hill Fort in the 1980's and had a workshop and retail outlet there. His unit had the only working fire place and he remembers fondly the lovely feel of an open fire when it was cold.

By that time the Fort was in private ownership and open to the paying public. It housed a number of private enterprises. Gary recalls there was an upholsterer, a book binder and seller, and someone selling holograms. He remembers a café and pub (The Palmerston), There was also a shoe shop and a manufacturer and seller of cement garden gnomes.

Upstairs in the Fort there was a military museum displaying memorabilia including ordnance shells, shrapnel and various medals. Many of the items had been donated but Gary suggests that some artefacts were brought in for added interest. At one time the owner of the Fort, Ivor Allison constructed 3-wheel cars there from Spitfire parts which he exhibited, but these were relocated later to Jersey.

Gary remembers a chapel was opened in the rooms directly to the left of the main entrance and recalls the vicar who set it up very well. It had pews and a table as the altar.

Gary spoke also about the wildlife that lived in and around the Fort at that time, swifts nested every year in the large clock over the entrance and jackdaws frequented the chimney cavities. Owls were often heard and newts could be found in the moat and basking on the walls

Another type of 'wild life' arrived in the 1990's in the form of rave type parties and Gary said that they rather changed the nature of the place. At that time, he moved his premises elsewhere, but returned subsequently once the parties came to an end.

The following years saw a skatepark built in the moat by the latrines, and a cinema showing films about the history of the Fort. Gary recalls it later showed Saturday films and eventually moved into using the new technologies of the day.

It was a great privilege to speak with Gary and we are most grateful for his time and contribution to the Golden Hill Country Park Heritage project.

Penny Green

Penny, one of our volunteers along with her husband Dave, had one of the craft stalls within Golden Hill Fort in the 1980s. She has written some of her memories for us:

"I am informed that Golden Hill Fort was built by French prisoners of war in 1864. It became and Royal Artillery Gunner college.

I believe a gentleman by the name of George Weeks bought Golden Hill and Fort Victoria

with the express intention of demolishing both of them to sell the rubble which was, at that time, in great demand. When this venture, fortunately, failed Mr Weeks rented out the rooms and it became an industrial site in the early 1980's, with the likes of Millways, Readers, Furniture manufacturers and a car workshop to name but a few. Most, if not all the site was let out to local businesses.

It was then bought by a Mr Perkins who lived on the mainland and from around 1984 to the Fort became a visitor attraction with a resident caretaker. It was very popular with locals and visitors alike.

There was the Gnome Man who turned his unit into a little fairy, or should I say, gnome land. Also, a gem and fossil shop, now trading in Yarmouth, a model railway, a café, a pub, a bookbinder, a maker of miniatures, a furniture restorer, a gift shop, an artist, a pottery, a blacksmith, a woodworker, a leather worker, a lady who made anything useful and practical on her sewing machine and a couple who specialised in cross stitch. Also, there was for a time a Friday Market.

One person who cannot be forgotten is the ghost of a soldier who was often seen frequenting the pub. Mrs Hughes was making sandwiches in her cafe when she was aware of someone standing behind her. She continued making her sandwiches and said to the person " if you're going to stand there doing nothing, I'll give you a job" When they didn't respond she turned round and there was no one there.

The Fort became so popular that the owner decided to introduce an entrance fee. This resulted in the locals boycotting the place and visitors repeatedly turning away understandably not wanting to pay to enter what was primarily a retail venue. The businesses inevitably closed and the Fort was used for art exhibitions for a while but proved to be unsuitable due to the dampness of the building. It went back onto the market for a very long time and fell into disrepair. It was used from time to time for illegal raves. Eventually, the Fort was purchased by a developer who has converted the building into apartments and it remains in good repair."

Famous People associated with GHF during its use in both World Wars:

HARRY PATCH

by Linda and Peter Harding.

Born Henry John Patch in Combe down on the edge of the Somerset city of Bath 17TH June 1898 , Harry was the Son of William John Patch and Elizabeth Anne Patch and brother to George and William

Harry Patch (Lance Corporal) was known as The Last Fighting Tommy of World War 1. He was the only surviving veteran of the trenches and lived to the age of 108 years old. He told his story of his experiences during both wars in his biography (Patch and Van Emden, 2007).

Harry served in the 7th Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry as part of the Lewis Gun Team and arrived in France in June 1917. His job was to carry and assemble the parts for the machine gun to make sure that it worked.

Harry was injured in the 22nd September 1917 during the Battle of Paschendale and was brought back to Britain to recover. Once he was fit enough for battle, he was sent to Golden Hill Fort on the 1ST November 1917.

Harry described the Fort as a huge Victorian building, hexagonal in design with superb views of the Solent with the Parade Ground in the middle. He notes that hundreds of men were billeted in the Barrack rooms inside the Fort, and that there were so many men training, the overflow were billeted just outside the Fort's main entrance in huts.

In the late summer of 1918 Harry was considered fit for duty and was placed on the next draft to go back to his Regiment in Belgium, however they were told that the war was coming to an end.

On the morning of 11TH November 1918, Harry was on the firing range and had been told that a rocket would be sent up if a ceasefire was signed. They all cheered with immense joy and relief when they saw the rocket fired about 11am. The Officer in charge of Harry's training told them to fire their spare ammunition into the sea. One man fired at the markers hut whilst the markers were still inside it.

Harry and his colleagues were marched back to camp and then attended a Thanksgiving Service at the Church, after which they were told that they were not allowed to leave the camp by the Sergeant. This announcement caused some resentment in some of the soldiers who chased the Sergeant down the Pier at Yarmouth and threw him in the sea. Other celebrations included the Needles Lighthouse sounded for the first time in four years in celebration.

After the Armistice had been signed, a large number of men who had seen active duty in France were told they would not have to return to France. However, it was another 5 months before these men could leave Golden Hill during which time the number of men had grown from 260 to over 1000. Resentment at not being able to leave appears to have caused some soldiers to refuse to double march and, when "roused by a Sergeant", they refused to obey and threw a boot at him. After airing their grievances to the Officer in Charge, the Harry and the men were threatened at gunpoint to follow orders, which they disobeyed.

This was considered an act of mutiny, but the Brigadier called over from the mainland to assess the problem removed the Officer. Soon after this, Harry and his Company were given leave orders and taken to Gosport and was able to travel home to Bath.

Harry Patch was awarded 8 medals (British War Medal; The Allied Victory Medal; 2x French Legion de Honneur awards; The Knight of The Order of Leopold WW2; 45 Defence Medal (bath fire service); The National Service Medal; Hors De Combat Medal) and an Honorary Degree of Master of Arts by the University of Bristol whose building he helped construct in the 1920s.

After the Great War Harry returned to his job as a plumber and during his long life Harry had two sons from his first marriage Denis Howard Patch 1920 and Gordon Roy Patch 1927. Harry died 25th July 2009 aged 111 years 38 days at Wells, Somerset England and was buried at St Michaels churchyard Monkton Coombe Bath near his parents and brother

A. A. Milne at Golden Hill Fort in 1915

By Caroline Dudley

In September 1914, the 4th (Special Reserve) Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment travelled down from their barracks near Warwick to Golden Hill Fort, Freshwater. Around 3,000 recruits for Lord Kitchener's Army, many from the Birmingham area, soon followed and it was the job of the 4th Battalion to train them. The men were billeted in empty houses and public halls and also accommodated in tents and then wooden huts newly erected on the south-east side of the fort. The old rifle range at East Afton was reconstructed for

training, and drilling was constantly taking place on the parade grounds around the fort. For more than a year the men became very much part of local life – the regiment's band provided musical entertainment at many local functions, whilst the officers hosted games competitions (billiards, bridge and whist) with local clubs.

One training officer who joined the 4th Battalion at the beginning of February 1915 was 33-year-old Alan Alexander Milne, better known to us today as A. A. Milne, author of the Winnie-the-Pooh stories. Alan was working in London as Assistant Editor of the satirical magazine *Punch* at the time war broke out on 4th August 1914. He had pacifist views but, like many others, believed that this was the war to end all wars and so was willing to volunteer and do his bit. On 6th August he wrote to a friend asking for a job in the Admiralty, but was turned down. Over the next few months, he continued to work at *Punch* but also drilled the London Old Boys Corps as a civilian. Then, on 10th February 1915, he heard that he had received a commission as Second Lieutenant (on probation) with the Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

Alan arrived at Golden Hill Fort on 17th February. Here, Major Charles Massie Blomfield, nephew of his work colleague Charles Graves at *Punch*, was the popular Adjutant. In his autobiography *It's Too Late Now* (Milne 1939), Alan described his first few weeks as Second Lieutenant:

'I was commissioned to the 4th Battalion of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, then stationed at Golden Hill in the Isle of Wight. In the orderly room I said "Sir" to the Adjutant, whose uncle I called "Charles" on the *Punch* Table. It gave me no compensating thrill that elderly sergeants who knew all about soldiering said "Sir" to me. It was a reserve battalion, into which the Colonel had persuaded many of his personal friends, some of whom were married. After six experimental weeks in which I learnt to be just a little, but not much, like a soldier, Daphne joined the married strength, and from then on, whenever it was possible, she shared the war with me.'

Alan had married Dorothy de Sélincourt, known as 'Daphne', in 1913. When Daphne joined him on the Isle of Wight, they rented a house called De-La-Ware, in The Avenue, Totland.

Because of Alan's experience at drilling the London Old Boys Corps, he was allowed to show off his drilling straight away. In a letter to his brother, Ken, he described one of his early drilling sessions:

'I then got going in a beautiful clear voice as follows: "Move to the left in fours, form fours, left, by the left quick march... At the halt on the left form fours, left, by the left quick march... At the halt on the left form sections... by the right quick march... at the halt on the left form lines, remainder left incline..." all given with the air of one to whom all this was utter child's play. We progressed at a terrific pace and I ran about and waved my stick and by the time the Adjutant caught us we were nearly off the Island. He said "Look here this is company drill; you're supposed to be doing platoon drill" and then tried to get his breath again. I said "There's so little to do in platoon drill, Sir." He said "Well get them in line of sections in fours at twenty paces interval facing there" and he pointed to the right.'

In the same letter, he also told his brother, seemingly with some relief: 'It's all very interesting and not quite so alarming as I thought.' However, despite Alan's enthusiasm for drilling the men, he struggled to acquire the necessary skills in the use of a rifle and bayonet. He would write 25 years later:

'My knowledge of firearms or (as they are called, I never discovered why) weapons of precision, was not worth passing on. It is true that my men carried rifles, and that I

inspected them from time to time, but I never knew what I was looking for... I never, as they say, fired a shot in anger, and only twelve under the impetus of any other emotion. These all missed the musketry instructor, but hit the Isle of Wight.'



Figure 30: De-La-Ware (now No. 58), The Avenue, Totland,

A. A. Milne and his wife, Daphne, stayed at De-La-Ware (now no 58, The Avenue, Totland) for a few months in 1915 while he was stationed at Golden Hill Fort. It was here that he wrote the play *The Two Wishes* and later began to write a children's book based on the characters in this play. The book was completed after his battalion had moved to Sandown. It was called *Once on a Time* and would be his first published novel. (Image from www.rightmove.co.uk, 2019.)

Alan's wife, Daphne, became great friends with Mrs Williams, the Colonel's wife, and mother of five children and the regiment. Along with Mrs Wailes, wife of Major Wailes, they put their heads together and planned an entertainment for the troops, one of the features of which was to be a little play in which Daphne and the children of the Colonel and Major would act. Daphne broke the news to Alan that he was to write the play but he replied that he was much too tired in the evenings to write anything. So, Daphne said that *she* would do the writing; all he had to do was to lie in an armchair and tell her what to write. Thus persuaded, Alan dictated the play, which he called *The Two Wishes*, a humorous fairy tale about a prince and princess, a wicked countess and a magic ring. The entertainment was performed on 15th July at the Assembly Rooms in Freshwater and proved so popular that it had to be repeated the following day. According to the *Isle of Wight County Press*, the play 'was full of fun and absurdity, and the audience thoroughly enjoyed it.'

Isle of Wight County Press Saturday 17th July 1915, page 8: FRESHWATER
A SPLENDID ENTERTAINMENT.—arranged by Mrs Wailes (wife of Major W. E. Wailes, R.G.A.) in aid of the I.W. Belgian Field Hospital, was held at the Assembly-room on Thursday and proved so popular that many failed to gain admission. The band of the 4th Batt. Royal Warwickshire Regiment, under Conductor P. G. Webster, played a capital selection and accompanied the dances. 2nd-Lieut. Nicholas Breene received a well-merited encore for his tasteful singing of the song 'Your dear heart'. C.Q.M.S. G. King again delighted all by his clever vocalism. He first sang 'The deathless army', and showed his versatility by responding to an encore with a highly amusing song, entitled 'Looking for trouble'. The Misses Williams and Sheila Wailes, attired as pierrots, danced in charming style, the Misses Williams (the talented daughters of Col. and Mrs A. E. Williams) gave a

pretty exhibition of Indian club-swinging, Miss Phyllis Williams did some wonderful skipping, and Miss Sheila Wailes once more proved herself a charming little dancer in a flag dance. The second portion of the entertainment consisted of a play, written by Lieut. A. A. Milne, of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment (a well-known contributor to *Punch*), entitled 'The Two Wishes'. It was full of fun and absurdity, and the audience thoroughly enjoyed it. The artistes, all of whom acquitted themselves admirably, were Mrs Milne, the Misses Joyce, Pamela, and Phyllis Williams, and Miss Sheila Wailes. The entertainment was repeated last (Friday) evening.



Figure 31: This photograph, taken circa 1918, shows the Assembly Rooms between Elliott's shop and the Royal Standard.

It was at the Assembly Rooms where the play *The Two Wishes*, written by Second Lieutenant A. A. Milne, was performed to packed audiences on 15th and 16th July 1915. The Assembly Rooms were first opened in 1885 and burned down in 1929. The restaurant called Petesaria is now on the site. (Image courtesy of Freshwater & Totland Archive Group)

Alan left the Island for a nine-week signalling course in Weymouth early in August 1915 but returned to Golden Hill in October. He and Daphne had been rather pleased with *The Two Wishes*, and thought some of the dialogue rather funny. Daphne said 'You mustn't waste this.' She suggested that Alan write a book around the people in the play. 'I've never written a book,' he protested, 'not straight off.' 'Well, now's the time to begin,' she replied. So, they began to write a novel based on the characters in *The Two Wishes*. This would be called *Once on a Time*.

At the end of October 1915, Alan's battalion moved to Sandown. He was now a qualified Signalling Officer and his commission as Second Lieutenant was confirmed in December. Time was spent training the men in signalling and leading them on route marches. He did not see his commanding officer for weeks at a time and felt some sense of having regained his independence.

The following January, *The Two Wishes* was performed again, at Shanklin Town Hall, as part of another programme of entertainment to raise funds for the I.W. Belgian Field Hospital. This time Second Lieut. Milne was recorded among the actors.

The Isle of Wight County Press report of Saturday 29th January 1916 (page 7) is reproduced below:

"TWO PLAYS AT THE TOWN-HALL.—Striking evidence of the popularity of the 4th Royal Warwickshire Regiment was once again afforded at the Town-hall on Friday evening of last week. The occasion was the performance of two plays, 'The Two Wishes' and 'The Dream', by Mrs A. E. Williams, wife of the officer commanding the battalion, assisted by the officers and friends of the regiment. The hall was filled to overflowing, a large number of the officers and men of the battalion attending in order to witness the plays, which were to a large extent performed by the popular Colonel's children. The Royal Warwickshire Band, under the direction of Sergt. P. G. Webster, supplied the incidental music and contributed two numbers in first-class style, 'Martha' (Flotow) and 'Slavonic Rhapsody' (Friedmann). The stage was handsomely adorned with bamboos, palms, &c., kindly lent by Mr A. H. H. Atherley, J.P., of Landguard Manor. Everything connected with the play was of great merit, but special mention must be made of the beautiful colour effects gained by the skilful use of stage setting together with the dainty dresses worn by the artistes. Especially was this noticeable in 'The Dream'. Those responsible are deserving of all praise. The entertainment was in aid of the I.W. Belgian Field Hospital and Barge, with which Mme. O'Gorman is actively associated and a very satisfactory amount was realised. Mme. O'Gorman, who, as a daughter of the late Col. Daniel, is well known to many Shanklin people, has rendered valuable nursing assistance practically since the outbreak of war. Commencing with hospital work at Antwerp, Mme. O'Gorman left the city shortly before its capture by the Germans, and formed a field hospital near Ypres, which owing to military requirements it was found necessary to remove after it had rendered useful service. Following this, Mme. O'Gorman devoted her attention to a large hospital, with which she is doing excellent service at the present time. The first of the two plays was entitled 'The Two Wishes: A Romantic Absurdity', written by Lieut. A. A. Milne, of the 4th Royal Warwickshire Regiment, in which the parts were sustained by the following: King Merrywig of Euralia, Lieut. Milne; Princess Hyacinth (the King's daughter), Miss Joyce Williams; Countess Dracula, Mrs Milne; Wiggs and Woggs (two Court attendants), the Misses Sheila Wailes and Pamela Williams respectively; Prince Udo of Araby, Miss Phyllis Williams. The excellent acting of the youthful artistes and the brilliant dancing of Miss Sheila Wailes were features in the play. The second part of the programme was occupied by an exquisite fantasy, 'The Dream', written by Mrs Wailes, in which the beautiful colouring and lighting, combined with the graceful acting of the children, presented a most charming picture. The characters in this were: Stella, Miss Grace Wood; Will o' the Wisp, Master John Williams; Imagination, Miss Joyce Williams; Bluebell, Miss Pamela Williams; Columbine, Miss Sheila Wailes; Harlequin, Miss Phyllis Williams. The scene is a wild garden in which a fairy play takes place, the revels and dances of Columbine and Harlequin, Bluebell and Will o' the Wisp, and Imagination all presenting a delightful view of fairyland. The whole performance proved a huge success and the artistes in both plays acquitted themselves well".

Alan and Daphne were happy at Sandown, where they lived in 'the prettiest cottage in the town with lilacs and cherry-trees in the garden.' The exact whereabouts of this cottage is currently unknown. Unhelpfully, it was simply called 'The Cottage'. There is a possibility that it was The Cottage, 11 The Broadway, Sandown, as this wasn't far from the barracks. While staying here, Alan and Daphne continued working on the story *Once on a Time*. In his 1939 autobiography, Alan wrote of the book:

'There are, I think, some good things in it, but few people have read it, and nobody knows whether it is meant for children or for grown-ups. I don't know myself. But it was the greatest of fun to do. We began every evening at half-past five, I in my chair before the fire, my collaborator, pen in hand, brown head bent over table, writing, waiting, laughing: it made the war seem very far away, it took us back to our own happy life in London. On Sundays – for I seem to have excused myself Church

Parade too – we went for long walks over the cliffs with lunch in our pockets, and the characters in the book came with us, listening to us as we settled their fate for the next chapter.

‘It was a great moment when the last word was put down on paper. I had thought that I could never write more than two thousand consecutive words, and I had written sixty thousand. I had written a book. It was finished.’

The book was completed in March 1916 but was not published until late the following year. In the meantime, Alan had written his first full-length play, also at Sandown. This was called *Wurzel-Flummery* and was first performed at the New Theatre, London, in April 1917. Sadly, no copies of the play *The Two Wishes* appear to have survived, but *Once on a Time* has been published by many different publishers and illustrated by many different illustrators, including the well-known illustrator of children’s stories Charles Robinson. It has been read and enjoyed by both children and adults alike.

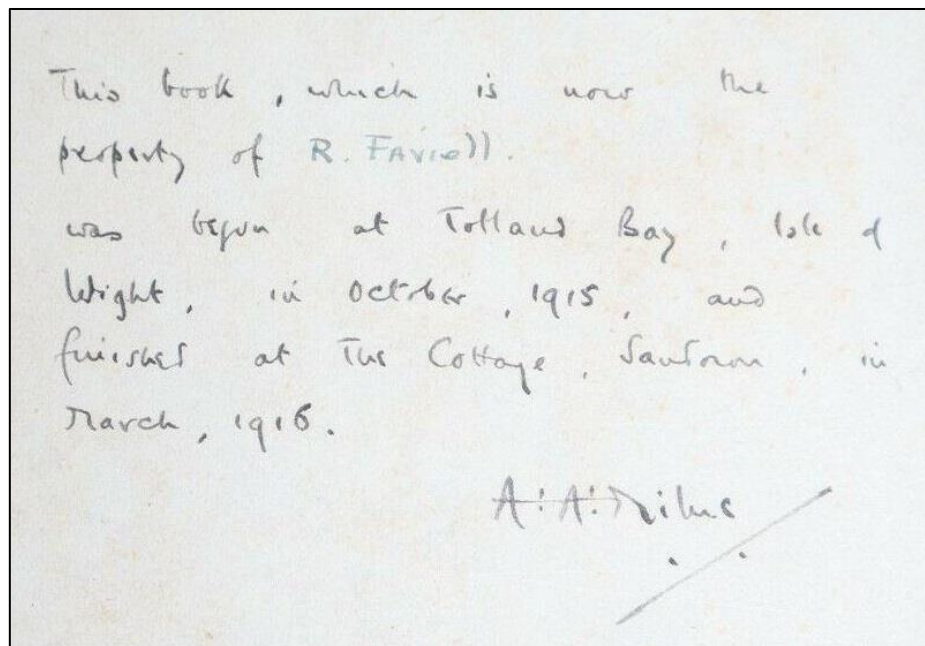


Figure 32: Signed first-edition copy of *Once on a Time*, published in November 1917 by Hodder and Stoughton, London, with illustrations by H. M. Brock.

Milne helpfully explains where and when he started and completed his story. The inscription reads: ‘This book, which is now the property of R. Faviell, was begun at Totland Bay, Isle of Wight, in October, 1915, and finished at The Cottage, Sandown, in March 1916. A. A. Milne.’ (Retrieved from www.abebooks.co.uk on 7th February 2021: <https://bit.ly/3pYFH6O>).

The front cover and title page of the 1925 edition of the book are shown overleaf and in his Preface, Alan wrote: ‘This book was written in 1915, for the amusement of my wife and myself at a time when life wasn’t very amusing’.

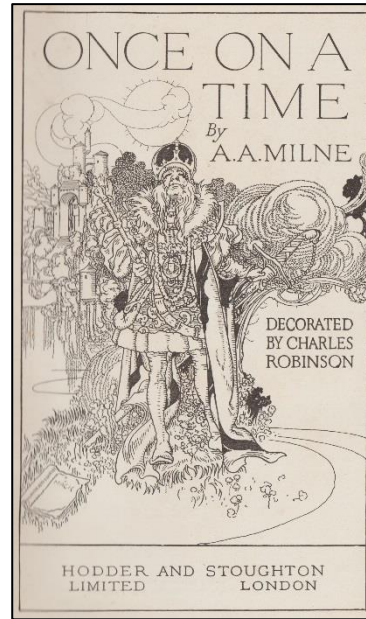
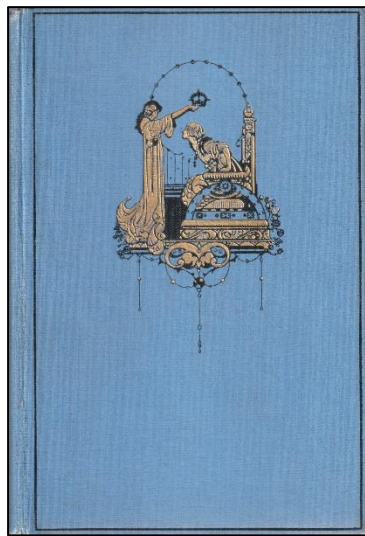


Figure 33: The front cover and title page of the 1925 edition of Once on a Time, published by Hodder & Stoughton and with illustrations by Charles Robinson.

The months in his role as a training instructor on the Isle of Wight came to an abrupt end in July 1916 when he was sent to the Somme in France. On the Western Front, he soon encountered the grim realities of the war, witnessing his best friend, Ernest Pusch, being blown to pieces as he was settling down for his tea. An attack then led to the deaths of about 60 soldiers in Alan's battalion and more than 100 wounded. It changed his view of the war, as he later wrote: 'It makes me almost physically sick of that nightmare of mental and moral degradation.'



By November Alan was seriously ill with trench fever and invalided back to England, where he was in hospital for many weeks.

He returned briefly to Sandown again in January 1917, but was transferred to the Royal Signal Corps at Fort Southwick in April 1917 as a Signals Instructor.

He was still suffering from his illness and in July spent three weeks in the Convalescent Hospital for Officers at Osborne House. Staying there at the same time was Robert Graves, the famous poet and writer. In September 1917, a Medical Board assessed Alan as suitable only for sedentary work.

He was transferred briefly to Dover, but in November 1917, he was seconded to the War Office Directorate of Military Intelligence, where he wrote propaganda for the rest of the war.

Figure 34: A.A. Milne as an instructor at the Portsmouth Garrison Signalling School, May 1917.

The work proved too exhausting for Alan, who was still suffering from trench fever, and that summer he would be sent to Osborne House to convalesce. (Image from www.royalsignalsmuseum.co.uk/a-a-milne)

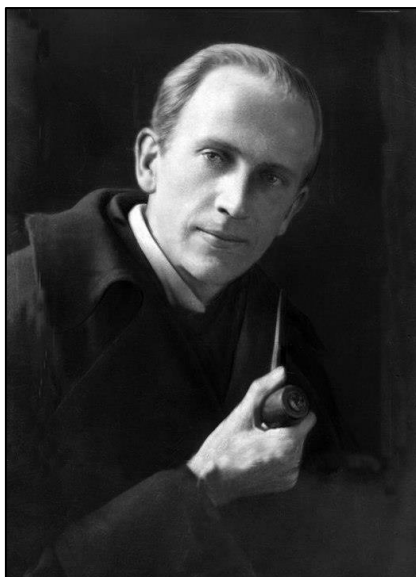


Figure 35: A. Milne pictured in September 1922.

In February 1924, Winnie-the-Pooh would make his debut in a poem called 'Teddy Bear', published in Punch magazine. Photograph by E. O. Hoppé. (Public Domain: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=58472213>)

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All Saints Church of England Primary School Records

All Saints Primary School on School Green Road, Freshwater, has been used as a school for more than 150 years. Recently discovered attendance registers for the school from 1916 to present day were studied by the children, with the help of volunteers, to discover how many military children from Golden Hill Fort attended the school between 1916 and 1962 when the fort closed.

The details of the 229 children with parents based at Golden Hill Fort, at Fort Victoria and associated with the Fort but with parents living in other accommodation who attended All Saints Primary between 1917 and 1949 are in Appendix 28 in volume 2 of this report.

The pupils of All Saints School carried out their own research on the Military children who had gone to their school and the report of the Class Teacher, Fiona Johnstone (one of our project volunteers is below:

All Saints Primary School Golden Hill Project

By Fiona Johnstone, All Saints Primary School Class Teacher 2016 – 2020.

All Saints Primary School is a small school to the south of Golden Hill Country Park. It has had a long association with Golden Hill from its earliest days when children from military families attended the school, right through to using the open space for wildlife discovery walks and archaeological investigations.

The school was due to close in August 2020 so staff and pupils wanted to track its history from 1850 through to 2020 and discover how it fitted into the life of the fort and later as it evolved into a country park. The intention was to create history displays and invite former pupils to the school to gather their oral histories and celebrate the school's long association with Freshwater. Sadly this was not possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic but here below is the results of early investigations by the pupils of All Saints before the school was locked down. In March 2020.

Mapping the Fort

The first task for the children was to find out where the fort was in relation to other Victorian forts in the area. They produced maps identifying the construction of military buildings in West Wight. Then then joined Dr Waller to look at the Golden Hill site and see the excavations of foundations for barracks, wash rooms and other buildings.

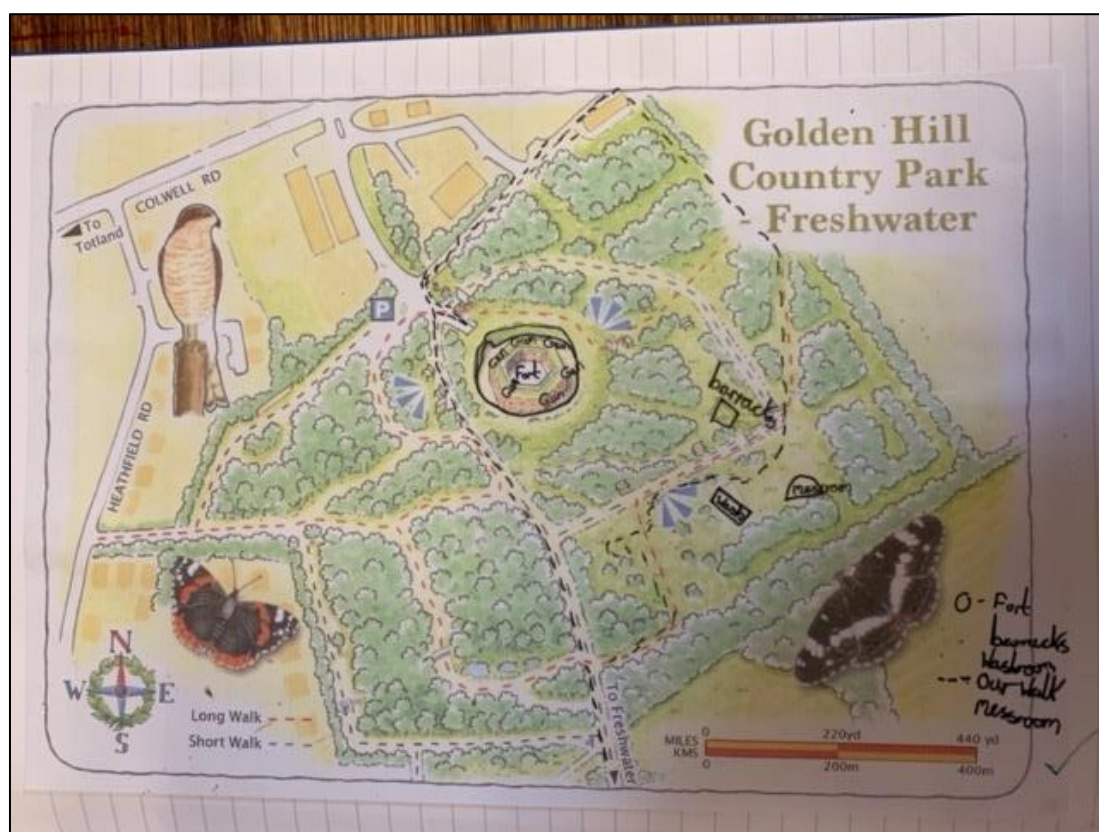


Figure 36: A walk around the park with Dr Waller looking for foundations

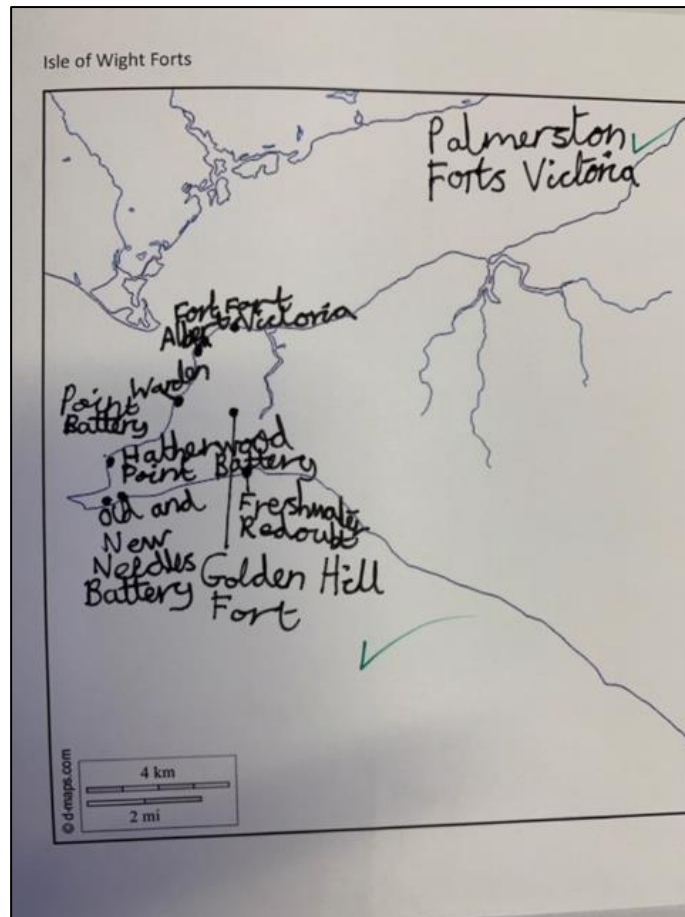


Figure 37: Palmerston Forts of West Wight

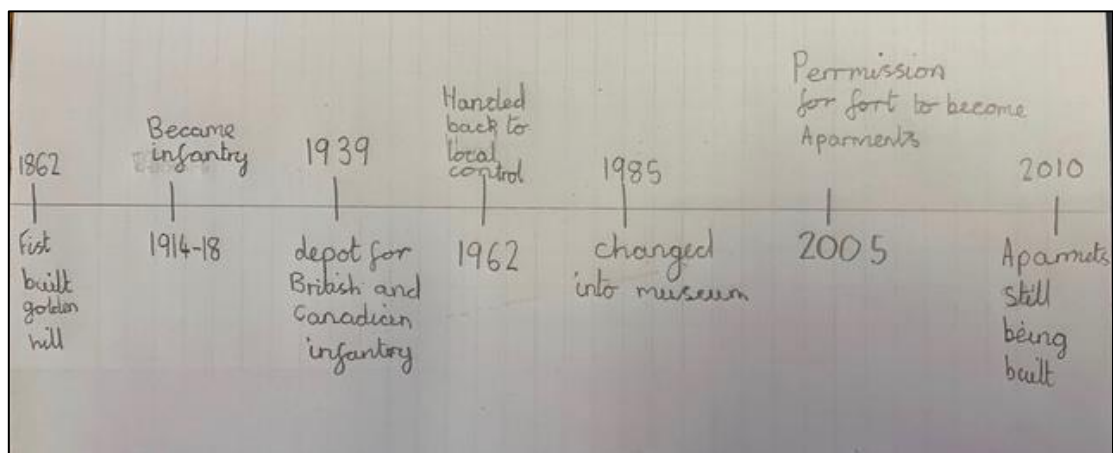


Figure 38: Time line for the forts

Attendance Records

Tucked away in a disused storeroom were the attendance registers for the school from 1916 to present day. With the help of volunteers, the children trawled through these registers to discover how many military children from Golden Hill Fort attended the school between 1916 and 1962 when the fort closed. Two examples of the data are shown overleaf.

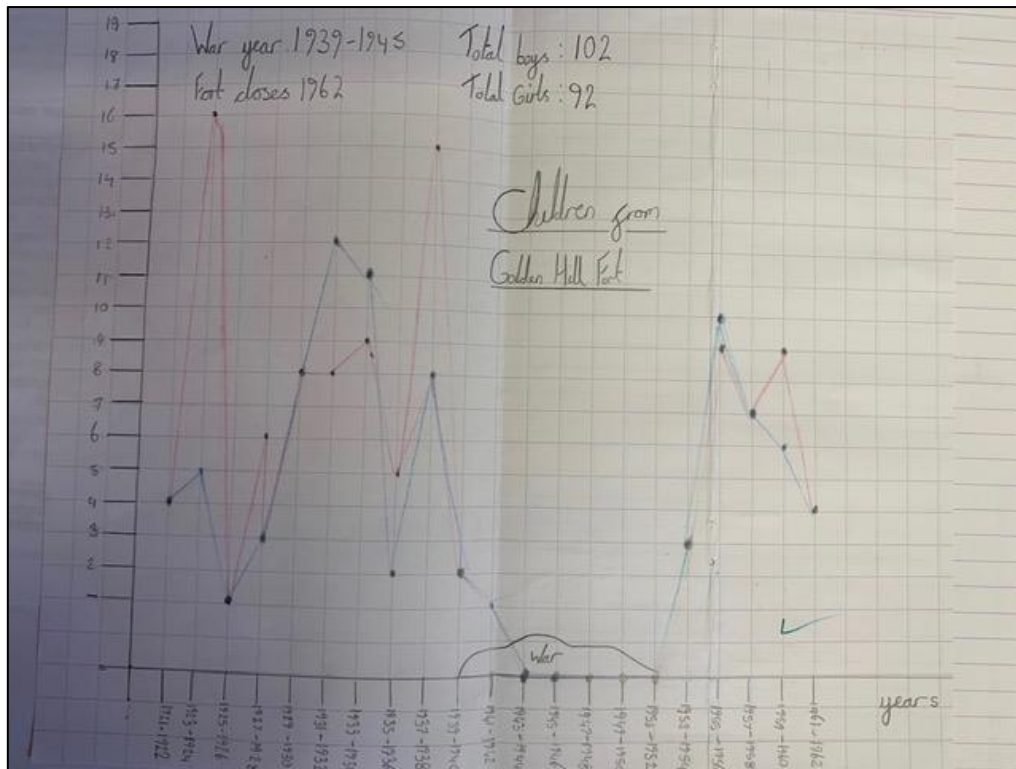


Figure 39: Children from Golden Hill worksheet 1

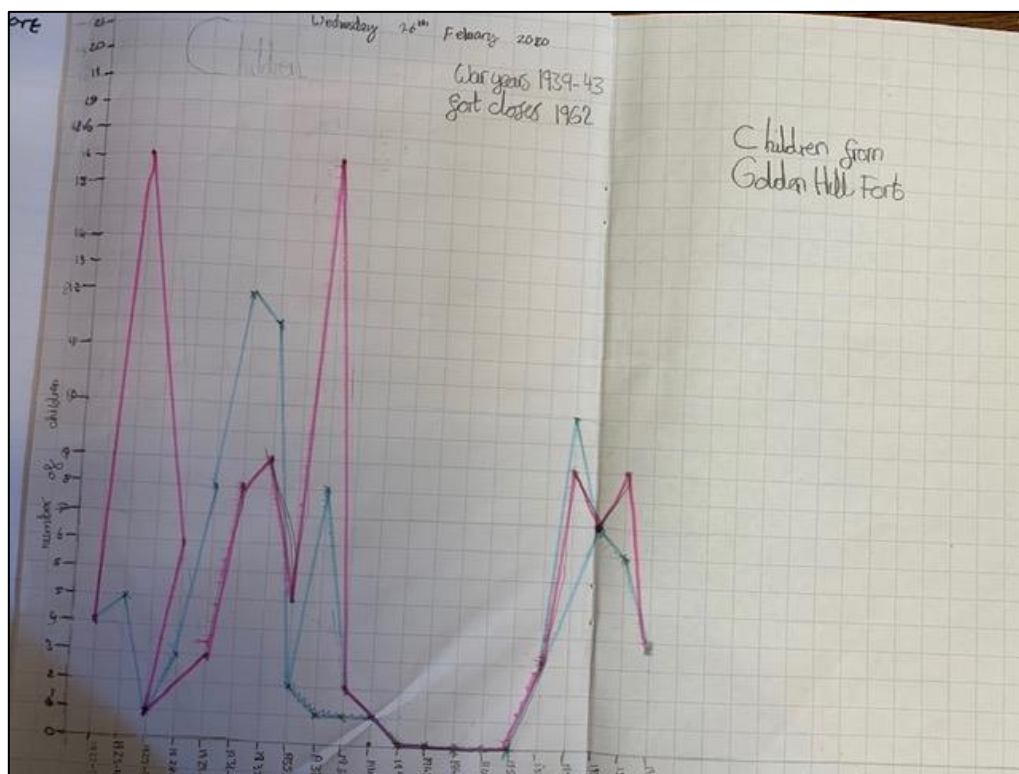


Figure 40: Children from Golden Hill worksheet 2

In addition, the children investigated the place families had move from and to. They discovered that soldiers worked as far away as Mauritius, India and Canada with considerable movement within the U.K.



Figure 41: Countries of the world lived in by military families from the Fort worksheet

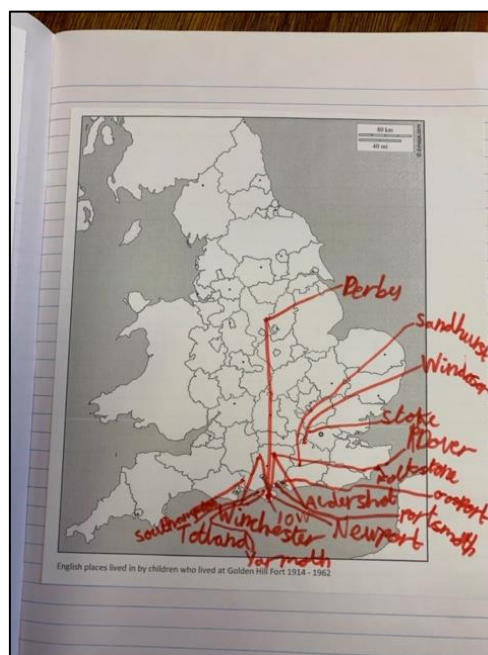


Figure 42: English towns lived in by military families from the fort worksheet.

Military Artefacts

With the help of Time Taxi – the children were given training in archaeological drawings. They used artefacts contemporary to the fort and came up with some good drawing of munitions that would have been used by the soldiers through their time at the fort.

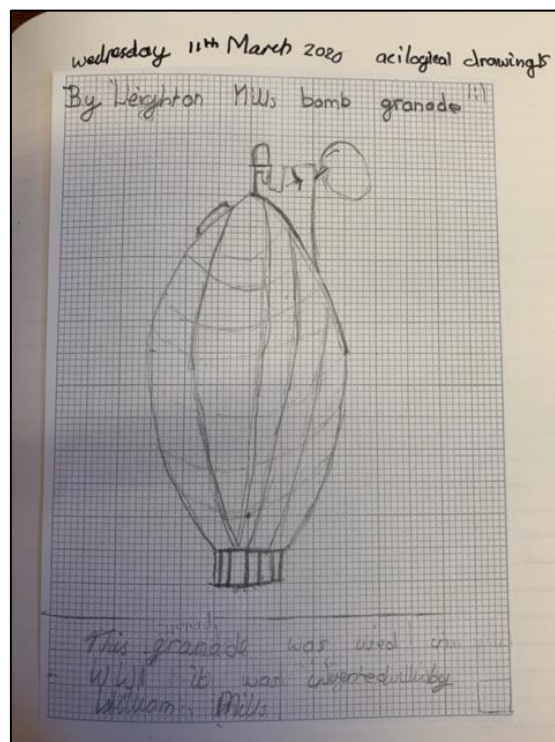
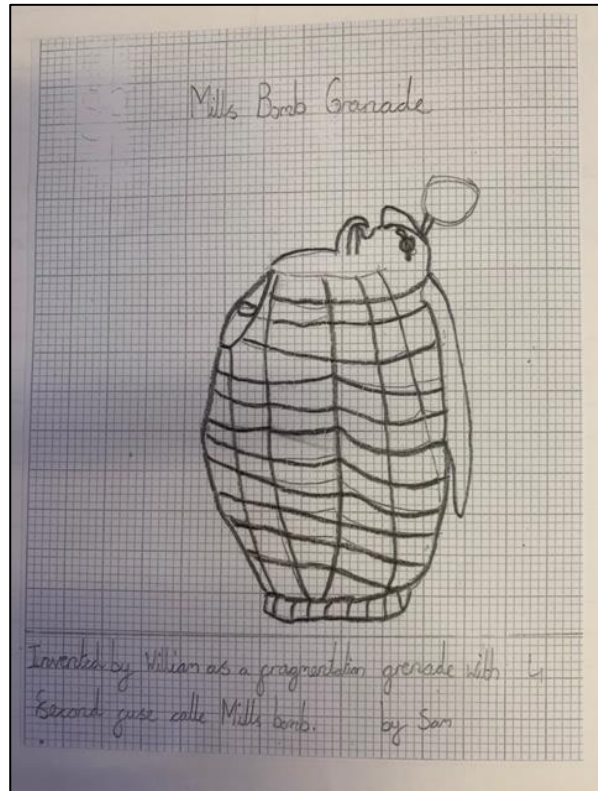
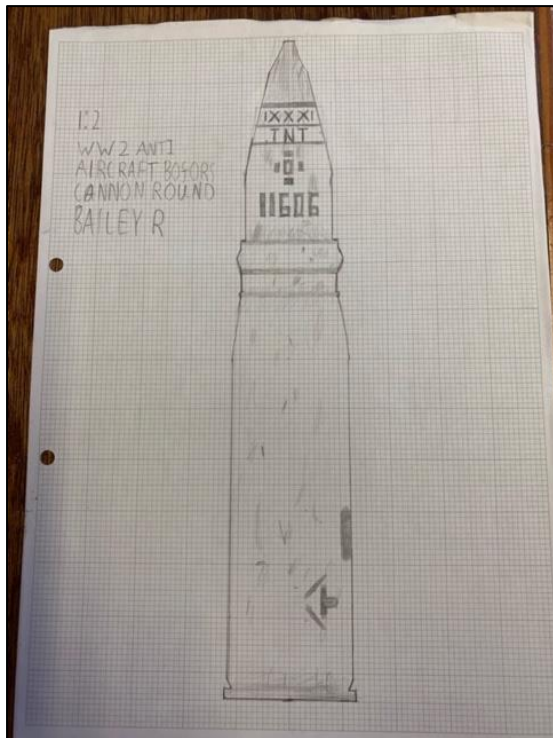


Figure 43: Pupils drawings of munitions used at Golden Hill Fort

AA Milne

Just before the lockdown the children started to look at the life of A. A. Milne who was a signalman at Golden Hill Fort during the First World War. Milne loved the outdoors and wrote

many stories and poems set in the countryside. His first ever play was written for military children to perform during the war.

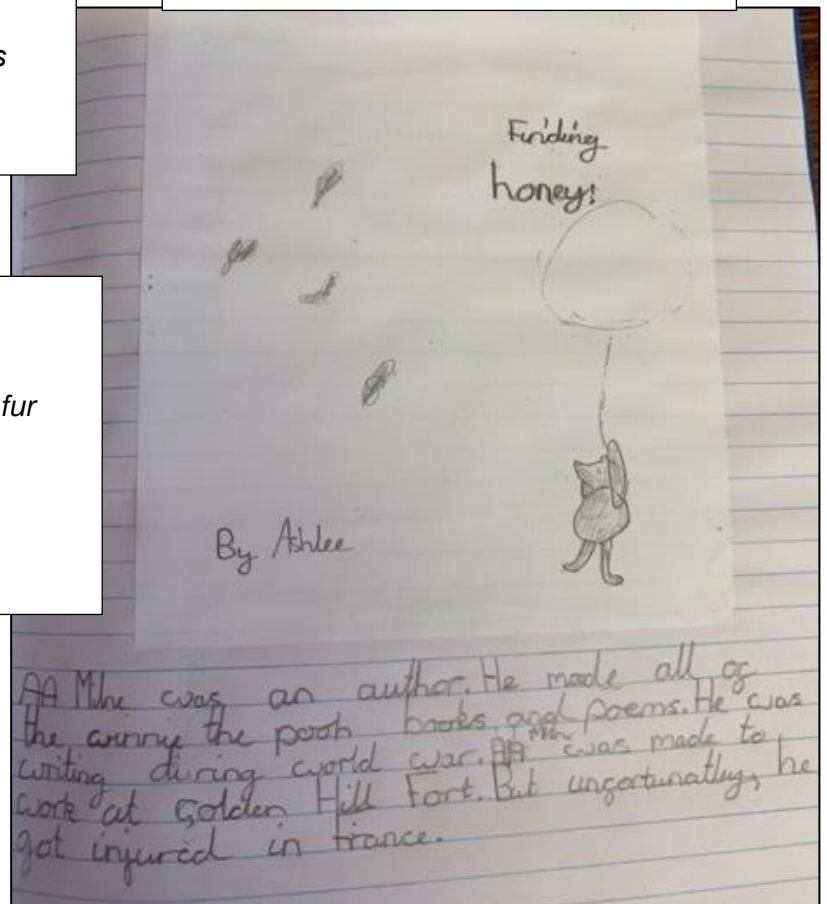
All Saints children took an example of one of his poems, *Puppy and I*, and adapted it to the countryside around the fort. Below is a compilation of the best verses.

Adapted from the poem, *Puppy and I* by A. A. Milne by All Saints Primary School pupils:

*I met a squirrel as I went walking;
We got talking,
Squirrel and I.
"where are you going to squirrel so red?"
(I said to the squirrel as he went by).
"Up to the woods to climb some trees
Will you come with me?"
"No not I!"*

*I met a soldier as I went walking;
We got talking,
soldier and I.
"where are you going to soldier?" I said,
(I said to the soldier as he went by).
"Down to the barracks to stand on duty
Will you come with me?"
"No not I!"*

*I met a rabbit as I went walking;
We got talking,
Rabbit and I.
"where are you going in your brown fur
coat?"
(I said to the rabbit as he went by).
"Inside my burrow to hide away.
Will you come with me?"
"No not I!"*



*I met a sargent as I went walking;
We got talking,
sergeant and I.
"where are you going to sergeant?" I said,
(I said to the sergeant as he went by).
Down to my billet to clean my boots
"Will you come with me?"
"No not I!"*

*I met a badger as I went walking;
We got talking,
Badger and I.
"where are you going to badger?" I said,
(I said to the badger as he went by).
"Up to the hills to tumble and play!"
"I'll come with you badger!" Said I.*

Pottery

The school was locked down in March 2020. Only children of keyworkers were allowed to attend but as restrictions eased, more children were allowed to return to school for their final term. In June the returning children worked with Kirstie Hayler, a local potter. They were to create large ceramic leaves depicting anything to do with Golden Hill Country Park. These leaves will be hung in the willow sculpture which will be constructed in the country park once Covid-19 restrictions allow. Below are a few examples of the unfired work.



The pandemic certainly put an end to what would have been a fantastic project to celebrate All Saints School but the children managed to produce some good work and had the opportunity to remember the school as it was. Indeed, the returning children produce a video which captures the ethos of the school. Please follow this link and enjoy!

All Saints School final goodbye on vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/437820978>

St Andrews church

St Andrew's Church lies 600m to the north of Golden Hill Fort. The land on which it lies was given to the Canon Isaacson by Miss Elizabeth Hamond in 1875 for the purpose of building a church. The project was funded by local residents and work on the first building was started in 1903. This was designed to initially be a school for the infants of Norton Green but to later become the chancel of a new church. It seems to have been used as a school, under the Rector Dr Merriman, for a short time. A report in the Southern Echo on 24th December 1904 states that the school was built for 45 children but at that time there were only 10 pupils.



Figure 44: St Andrew's Church today, photographed by Graham and Jackie Field

By 1913, the extension and conversion to a church was completed funded by many local residents, including Mrs Grosvenor Hoard and Lady Mary Hamond-Graeme and her family. The reopening and dedication ceremony by the Bishop of Southampton was reported in the IWCP issue of 4th September 1913. The article describes the extensions, designed by the original architect Mr J W Newman of Freshwater, as including a nave of 40x26 feet and two transepts of 20x10 feet. The Church was constructed by contractor Mr A. P. Williams of Newport with Ventnor stone dressings and rubble walls and was roofed with sand faced Island tiles. It originally had a bell turret at the west end of the roof with a bell dedicated to the memory of Colonel R Pearson Crozier which is no longer present.

The reason it is included in this report is that it was attended by the soldiers of the garrisons at Golden Hill Fort. Many of the church services and parades of the garrison troops reported in the IWCP were held at this church as well as at All Saint's Church.

On 15th March 1924 the IWCP reported the death of Miss Caroline Hamond-Graeme, sister of Captain Douglas who lived at Norlands. It states that she and her brother did much for the

building of St Andrews church including “a beautiful memorial to her in the artistic carving she did of the choir stalls and altar panelling in collaboration with the Misses Oldenshaw.”

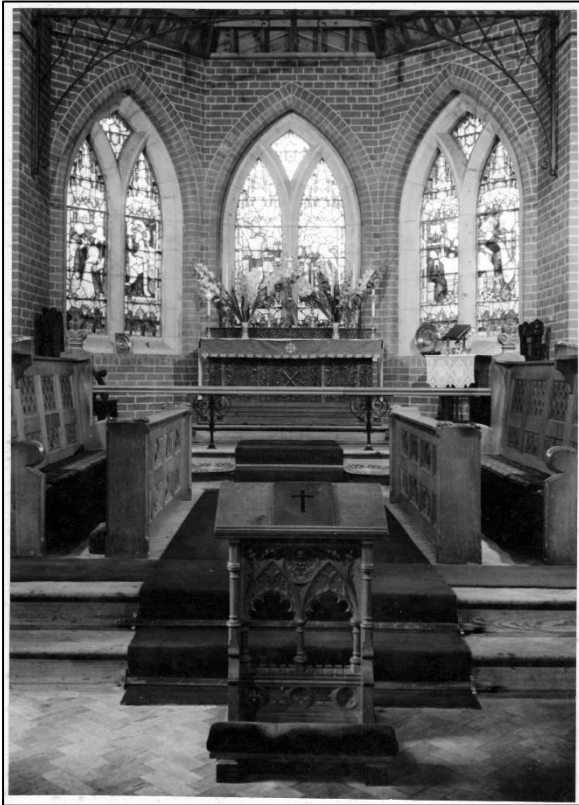


Figure 45: St Andrew's church interior

The picture of the interior of the church to the left of unknown date shows the choir stalls and some of the stained glass windows which included memorials to Mr W. J. Laidlay FRGS and two 2-light windows given by Mrs Cottrell in memory of her son, George Frederick Cottrell.

The IWCP of 28th March 1970 reports that the Rev S Collier, who had taken over the church 18 months previously, had asked the Bishop to close the church, to the dismay of the local residents.

St Andrew's was closed in April 1971 and was sold on behalf of the Church Commissioners in 1982.

Some documents held at the Isle of Wight County Records Office suggest that some of the memorial stained glass windows were moved elsewhere. The estate agents report (IWCRO/FRE/M/130) states that they were exempted from the sale and should be made

available by the purchaser to the Trustees or the Parochial Church Council. On 24th May 1981 an approach was made by the Rector of Wootton to acquire various furnishings including the windows (IWCRO/FRE/M/134). Sotheby's were asked to provide valuations (IWCRO/FRE/M/136) which gave the sizes of windows as 39x80 inches. However, no documentation could be found for whether the furnishings were acquired by the Wootton churches.

The church was bought by Mr and Mrs J G Skinner in 1982 and was converted into a private residence. Today it is used as a luxury holiday residence and we were unable to take record photographs of the interior due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Conclusions

The volunteers of the Golden Hill Heritage Research project have achieved the first comprehensive survey of some of the available sources to identify not only the soldiers stationed at Golden Hill Fort throughout its military history between 1869 and 1962, but also some of the people associated with the Fort and Country Park between 1964 and 2021.

Because the Covid-19 pandemic curtailed some of our research activities, there is plenty of additional work to be done for future researchers.

A copy of this report will be deposited with the Freshwater and Totland Archive Group (FaTAG), so that anyone wanting to add more to the stories of the people associated with Golden Hill can work with FaTAG if they wish to carry on the magnificent work which our volunteers have started.

Golden Hill Fort is still a stunning example of how the military heritage of the West Wight impacted upon the daily lives of people from the local community and it is fitting that this project has been achieved by members of that community.

Golden Hill Country Park was created by Harry Chandler and his team of local people and organisations for the benefit of local residents and visitors and this report is an appropriate tribute to all of those who have worked in the past and are still working to maintain this peaceful haven of natural beauty and local heritage.

Acknowledgements:

The research for this report was carried out by many local volunteers with the help of local and national heritage repositories.

Special thanks must be given to Richard Matthews for his thorough and comprehensive research of a gargantuan amount of data on the people in the censuses and to Caroline Dudley for research and provision of information from the Freshwater and Totland Archive Group archives.

Heartfelt thanks are given to all of the volunteers who contributed to this report (alphabetical order): Katy Bell; Sheila Colenutt; Frances Cook; Jane Daubney; Caroline Dudley; Graham and Jackie Field; Penny and David Green; Linda and Pete Harding; Josephine Hinson; Paul Johnson; Fiona and Pete Johnstone; Richard Matthews; Felicity Morgan; Terry Noyce; Steve Parkes; Tracy and Tim Welstead;

Assistance was also given by many people who provided information and photographs, who agreed to have their memories recorded or who helped in many other ways:

The Freshwater and Totland Archive Group; Freshwater Parish Council; Richard Smout and his colleagues at the Isle of Wight County Records Office; Dr Rebecca Loader and Mrs Rosie Lansley at the Isle of Wight County Archaeology Service; Steve Ashman; Ken Hicks; Reg Fussell; Charlie Davidson; Terence Hart; Cherry Thompson; Gary Mowle; Isle of Wight County Press Archive; Archaeological Discovery Centre at Fort Victoria; Paula Churcher; Rob Martin; Brian, Alan and Ash from the Vectis Diggers Metal Detecting Club; Paul Milnes; Carol Flux, Vanessa Langley and Graham Biss of Natural Enterprise/Gift to Nature; Gill Kennett; Helen Wood; Marion Preece; Lynne Copping; Vince Fennell, Ian Lennie and John Awty.

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