

## Memories by Christine Bury

*With contributions from Dorothy Bone, Wendy Bright and Clive Pugh, Margaret Rogers, Cathy Rudkin, John Saunders and Tony Stimson. My thanks to all of them for sharing their memories of Museum life and the Emsworth Maritime & Historical Trust (EMHT).*

### Cathy Rudkin

Cathy's Emsworth home and garden are full of her father David's memorabilia. The original printer on which the first letterheads and newsletter were published is in the garden shed. Her dad acted as a compositor, painstakingly assembling the metal characters. No word processors then, no professional printers such as we use today.

David lived in Thorney Road as a child. His mother was an eloquent and fiery preacher in the tin tabernacle opposite the house. David returned to Emsworth on retirement and his vision became to put Emsworth back on the map – we had oysters, the railway, seafarers, fishermen, entrepreneurs like J D Foster and Jack Kennett, and most importantly we built ships. There were ropemakers, carpenters etc. all with skills that he wanted to preserve. There was a great story to tell.

Cathy recalls both him and Jack Barrett in retirement digging in the mud near the Thorney side of Emsworth Marina looking for an artefact that David was sure they would find, even if he did not know what they would find. After digging and digging they uncovered a small donkey engine.

*Celebrating the 25th anniversary of the opening of the Museum are (from left to right) Cathy Rudkin, Dorothy Bone, Margaret Rule and Tony Stimson*



*David Rudkin by the river Ems*

David thought it essential that the Museum be run by volunteers who would invest both time and effort into making it a success. Cathy remembers the generosity of spirit shown by the people of Emsworth in making the Museum the success it is today.

Cathy moved permanently from Birmingham to Emsworth after her father died in January 1995. She became a regular steward. Cathy loved meeting Museum visitors and hearing their stories.

### John Saunders

John, our longest serving EMHT member, was at that very first meeting in Admiral Gick's offices in the marina where the Emsworth Maritime Trust was mooted. He had been bought along by his friend Bill Majer. A further meeting was convened in David Rudkin's home to draft the new constitution. John's expertise as a bank manager along with that of Harold Groom who had recently helped set up a constitution for the Bosmere 100 Society, a local conservation group, proved invaluable. John became the first treasurer, a position he held until 1989.

He recalls a time from those early days when a Director of the Hampshire Museums Service came to give them some advice about setting up an Emsworth Museum. His advice, 'not here, perfectly good museum in Havant' and he walked out.

The assembled group were determined to prove him wrong. 'Come hell or high water' they would establish a museum.

### **Dorothy Bone**

The land alongside Emsworth Marina was a good source of artefacts which were usually begged, borrowed or given to the newly formed Museum. Dorothy remembers workmen excavating a bank on the edge of the Marina discovering a long wooden mast in the mud.

David Rudkin came to have a look and decided that it was probably a mast from one of J D Foster's ships either Echo or Echo II. Noel Pycroft used some of his equipment to lift the mast and a section was removed and kept in the driveway of Dorothy's home for a number of years until the Museum opened in 1988. Members of the Trust stored many items destined for the Museum in their garden sheds.

Fundraising was a vital activity in those early years. Dorothy remembers standing outside the old post office with a collecting tin encouraging Emsworthians to give generously. The specially-made tins were designed by Keith Stoneman and many members rattled their tins around the town to encourage donations from passers-by. There were fundraising dinners, bric-a-brac sales and special events. One such event was a large public auction held in the old Baptist Church Hall in 1988 just before the Museum opened. Harold Groom was the auctioneer and John Saunders the treasurer.



*Preparing for the public auction in 1988*



*Getting ready for the Museum opening are, from the left, David Rudkin, Michael Kennett and Dorothy Bone*

Legacies have also helped keep the Museum solvent and the Laurence Mountford bequest enabled the refurbishment of the rooms. Prior to the opening up of the David Rudkin Room and the Archive/Research Room, the David Rudkin Room was self contained and was used as a meeting room. Margaret Rule and the Mary Rose committee used to have meetings there. The office of Tessa Daines, the then administrator, was in the Archive Room.

Volunteers in those early days were enthusiastic but unprofessional. They were part of the wartime make do and mend generation.

Dorothy became Honorary Secretary to the Trust in 1982, a position that she still holds. She was awarded the BEM in 2022 in recognition of her services to both the Trust and the Stroke Club.

### **Margaret Rogers**

Margaret loved to talk to people. She found that people wanted to tell you their stories. One of the first oral history recordings that she and Sylvia Courtnage did was about the WWII incendiary bomb that fell in Bath Road.

It was felt that there was a need to capture stories before people moved away or died.

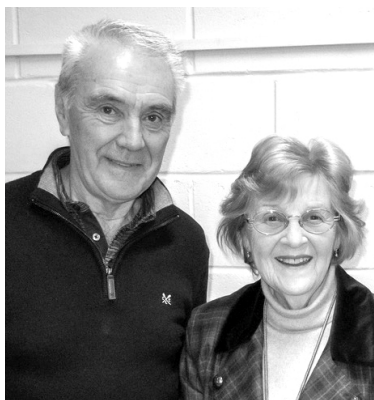
Margaret and Sylvia studied the best methods for producing oral histories at a course at the British Library. Later I did it too. We all learned a lot on how to record stories and the variety of people on the courses was illuminating.

*Sylvia Courtnage worked with Margaret on many projects*



Margaret and the late administrator, Linda Newell, would go out to give talks to schools about the Museum and its artefacts. Margaret had a connection with Portsmouth University and students would come to the Museum as part of a course. In return the Museum would benefit from their expertise.

She also wrote books. This began when Margaret was doing a degree course and covered a section on the expansion of the railways which promoted town development as here in Emsworth. This led to linking up with Ralph Cousins and the Park Community School. The school printed her books which are on sale on the Museum.



*Margaret Rogers with Steve Miller who oversaw the reorganisation of the files in the Archive/ Research Room*

Margaret was a steward, committee member, vice chairman and acting chairman.

## **Wendy Bright and Clive Pugh**

They joined in 2008/9 as stewards, who then became senior stewards, keyholders and exhibition creators. On the way they picked up many small jobs such as housekeeper, talks organiser and newsprint distributor.

Linda Newell suggested Wendy join the committee. Wendy took the letters EMHT as a model for the type of talk, i.e. E for Emsworth, M for Maritime, H for Historical and T for any other type. Wendy worked as a guide at the National Trust's Uppark estate and took many of her ideas for talks from their list of speakers. Local historian Philip Robinson gave Wendy's first talk in 2011 and he proved so popular that he gave many other talks on topics as wide-ranging as the Battle of Jutland and St Peter's Chapel in Emsworth.

Fundraising was all important and talks were a good way to promote the Museum. The talks were also an outreach to encourage local interest and participation.

The plan chest and maps in the Main Room were Clive's contribution. Up to his advent maps had been rolled and stored and Clive unfurled them and made them visible in the browser and the plan chest. He catalogued them too. In the attic of her cottage in Emsworth Janna Cundall had a plan chest in which she used to keep architectural drawings. The Museum could have it but they would have to move it down the spiral staircase, over to the Museum and up some more stairs. The chest came out in two halves and was reassembled in the Museum thanks to stalwart volunteers.



*Wendy Bright and Clive Pugh viewing documents from the Historic Properties exhibition*

Clive curated map exhibitions as well as others on properties and the photographer Maurice Broomfield. He also wrote booklets and articles on Emsworth's engraver William Pink and print publisher Edward Sandell.

### **Tony Stimson**

Tony recalls that in the winter of 2012/13 he and Bob Duncan (2 old codgers – his words) redecorated the lobby, stairs and reception area. As a contrast in the March at the AGM he was elected Chairman. During his tenure, the lease to 10b North Street was found to be unsigned so following renegotiation with Havant Borough Council (HBC) the lease was signed in February 2014.

In 2015 a new oyster gallery was created in the Main Room, constructed by 'carpenter' Bob Duncan. It was opened by Mayor of Havant, Cllr Marjorie Smallcorn. When Linda Newell died suddenly the gallery was renamed in her honour.

Evening soirées were held in the Museum linked to temporary exhibitions which improved community relations when notables came and added to the publicity.

Tony was not born in Emsworth but his 3xgreat grandmother, Charlotte Payne, was born here in 1802. So Tony has roots here. His

late wife, Julia, was Emsworth born and often met others whom she was at school with and encouraged them to visit the Museum.

Tony remembers visits to the RNLI headquarters in Poole and the Houses of Parliament when Peter Morse would organise quizzes for the coach journeys.

Dorothy, Wendy, Clive and Tony worked long and hard over all the procedural documents that had to be written to achieve the initial Accreditation. These put us on the professional path which is still being followed. Accreditation gave us and the Museum status and credibility.

One of Tony's last tasks as Chairman came in 2018 when he welcomed Paul and Linda Degris to the Museum. The couple donated photographs and the French Naval uniform worn by Paul's father when he was stationed at the Free French Camp in Hollybank Lane during WWII. To his delight, Tony spotted a Gieves label in the inside pocket of the uniform.

Tony has continued his liaison with HBC and master minded the fitting of the new blue front door. A front door that welcomes visitors and symbolises the Trust's achievement in reaching the 50th anniversary.