

# PRESS RELEASE

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## APPEAL FOR INFORMATION ON MISSING BELL

The bell tower of Greyladyes Chapel in Bursledon is a familiar sight to anyone passing through the picturesque Hampshire village, but why is one of its bells missing? There are plenty of stories involving soldiers during World War II stealing it as a prank and then throwing it in the river, but no-one knows the full story of its disappearance - or do they?

Greyladyes Arts Foundation (GAF) who now own the chapel (after successfully raising £90,000 to secure its future and preserve it for the community) are establishing an online archive of photographs, documents and stories to do with local history and heritage of the area. GAF would like anyone who thinks they may know anything about the story of Greyladyes Bell, or any other interesting stories from Bursledon's past, to contact them so they can add it to their archive.

### Making History at GAF - 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> August

GAF are organising a weekend of events celebrating the history of Bursledon and the surrounding area to encourage people to contribute to the archive. They are inviting anyone who has anything that might help to build up a picture of the history of Bursledon, whether it be photographs, letters, diaries, objects - anything, in fact, that could be of interest - to bring it to the chapel over the weekend. The objects will be digitally photographed or scanned on the spot so that people can take their artefacts home with them the same day. There will be local history experts on hand to look at the objects and discuss the stories behind them with their owners.

There will also be other activities taking place throughout the weekend, such as a treasure hunt to find the missing bell, a guided walk of the village and talks by experts on various aspects of local history, including shipbuilding, smuggling and high society figures from the past. There will be plenty to do and see for people of all ages, even if you don't have any artefacts to bring with you. Just come along and join in.

Jeff Martin, Chairman of The Bursledon History Society, Parish Councillor and GAF's archive co-ordinator, said, *"This is a fantastic opportunity to bring together in one place as many documents, objects and memories as possible so that we can preserve Bursledon's rich and varied history for future generations. We think it is vitally important that as many people as possible can have access to and contribute to the archive. Even things that might seem small and insignificant on their own will help to build up a really vivid picture of life in Bursledon in the past. We hope that the archive will continue to develop and enlarge as time goes on, providing a valuable and fascinating resource for everyone."*

GAF will release further details about the archive and the history weekend nearer the time, so please keep an eye on the website - [www.gaf.org.uk](http://www.gaf.org.uk) - to find out exactly what's happening and how you can get involved. You can also contact GAF through the website at any time if you have any information that you think may be of interest.

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For further  
information about  
GAF please visit

[www.gaf.org.uk](http://www.gaf.org.uk)

## Dates and times:

### Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> August - 11am - 6pm

Exhibition open to the public  
Series of short, informal talks  
Children's activities  
Refreshments

### Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> August - 11am - 5pm

Exhibition open to the public  
Guided walk around the village  
Treasure Hunt  
Children's activities  
Refreshments

## Notes to Editors

1. Greyladyes Arts Foundation (GAF) is a charity set up by locals to safeguard the chapel for the local community and establish an arts centre. With the help and generosity of their supporters, GAF raised £90,000 to buy the building in less than 10 months. Both Bursledon Parish Council and Eastleigh Borough Council donated £6,000 and the remaining £78,000 was raised through donations from the public.
2. The chapel now needs careful restoration; the arts centre is due for completion in the autumn of 2007. The arts centre will host an exciting programme of exhibitions and events covering a wide range of arts related activities. These will include visual art, music, film, photography and local history. There will also be a diverse selection of classes, seminars and lectures for all ages and abilities. Many activities for children will be provided, including Saturday morning art clubs and a programme of events planned for the school holidays.
3. Bursledon is a picturesque village in Hampshire on the river Hamble with a long history of boatbuilding. Nelson's flagship at the battle of Copenhagen, "The Elephant" was built there in 1786. More recently the village became famous for its starring role in the television series "Howard's Way".
4. Greyladyes chapel was originally built as a ballroom for the main house (which, at that time was called Elm Lodge). Later it was used as a meeting place for the Parish Council and other local bodies. In 1906, the then owner of the house, Mrs Shawe-Storey, who had renamed it Greyladyes after a ghost that was said to haunt her childhood home in Northumberland, converted the ballroom into a Roman Catholic chapel.
5. During World War II Greyladyes was requisitioned by the armed services and it is said that, after a visit to the local hostelry, some enthusiastic soldiers climbed the bell tower and requisitioned one of the bells. After the war the chapel (with its one remaining bell) was sold to the Diocese of Portsmouth and served the Catholic community of Bursledon until May 2004, when it became redundant and was duly deconsecrated.