

## The Galleon Victoria

It was with some surprise that I received a message from the Fundacion Nao Victoria, asking if they might be able to berth at short notice in Cowes. With delight I put them in touch with the Harbour Master who promptly accommodated them.

The Victoria is a replica of the Spanish galleon that was the first ship to circumnavigate the globe. It's a bit smaller than the Andalucia and Santa Maria, both of which have visited us in consecutive previous years. Interestingly, the Victoria had no ship's wheel, steering was via a post sticking up through the stern castle, connected to the tiller in the deck below. Also, the cannons pre-date cast barrels and are made from strips of wrought iron bound together with rigs to stop them splitting under fire.

I went to welcome the ship on the afternoon of its arrival. I was accompanied by David Baldwin, the author of The Isle of Wight Armada Coast, a contingent of trustees from the society that David has set up and members of staff from Cowes Town Council. David presented the captain with a copy of his book and a special flag commemorating the Armada and I presented the captain with a town plaque and flag. Obviously, touched by our enthusiastic welcome, they captain and crew said they felt very at home in Cowes and, as is the Spanish custom, returned our hospitality in asserting *mi casa, el nao Victoria, es tu casa*.

There is an obvious potential to cement a firm relationship here, through the historic maritime links. The foundation is based in Huelva, which is between Cadiz and Faro in Portugal. Huelva is to the side of the amazing Donana Natural Park, believed by some to have been the location of the legendary Atlantis.

## Somerton Farm Approval

The Application to develop Somerton Farm, off the section of Newport Road behind Aldi, has been given outline approval. It was one of many sites identified for potential development in Northwood in the new Island Plan, Northwood, when viewed in isolation, taking more than its fair share, but, we were told, with Gurnard, we had to accommodate the allocation for the whole of the Cowes peninsula, there not being much land left to develop in Cowes. As such, it was felt at the time that Somerton would have the least adverse impact on the community, we could not object to everything and had to take our share for the Island. As it happens, the proposed development is very well thought out with a mixture of housing, including a significant amount of affordable housing and an area dedicated to light industrial units. The Applicant has been very cooperative with the Authority, especially regarding S106, community infrastructure, and we are getting a new, better link to the Cowes-Newport cycle way.

There is a real opportunity to deliver a model development here by working with the developer, whoever they may be. The Applicant is well versed in the built and natural environment and we have had discussions on the merits of Safer Streets and Healthier Streets initiatives, and is keen to see the subtle considerations in design that support sustainable travel, and even offered consideration and potential connectivity to the nearby medical centre.

By not calling the Application in, I believe we have achieved a far more constructive outcome, through negotiation, than by the usual adversarial approach, when, in reality, the likelihood of approval was inevitable. In my time as an IW Councillor, and previously serving on the Planning Committee, the time and effort wasted by bringing Applications to Committee that are inevitably going to be approved is scandalous and would be far better employed through developing better policy and having an open constructive path to negotiation supported by defined specific criteria that delivered against agreed objectives to a local area and overall Island development plan – but I can dream!

## Health Update

I cannot praise enough, the staff and treatment that I am receiving via Portsmouth at St Mary's. They have stabilised by blood chemistry through targeted medication and haemodialysis and I am now being trained to be able to carry out the dialysis at home. I am told, with good results, I may be able to reduce or stop most of the medication, as regular, slower dialysis takes over, and the outcome, for all intents and purposes, is comparable to having a transplant.

That fact is that I continue to live by the wonders of modern medicine and machinery and the efforts of the dedicated staff, so every day that I wake up is a bonus, and not to be wasted.