

The current Gosport Jazz Club website at [www.gosportjazz.org.uk](http://www.gosportjazz.org.uk) says:  
"Gosport Jazz Club started in the 1960s at Gosport Community Association, Thorngate Halls. Then in the early 1980s Molly & Ken Barton, landlords at the Park Hotel, Park Road, Gosport (now the Park Tavern), started Jazz nights with bands including Cuff Billett, Doug & Dory Whitfield, Monty Sunshine, Bob Jenkins, Teddy Layton, Chris Newman and Nat Gonella. The club gave Nat a new lease of life. He appeared regularly and featured on Radio Victory with Cuff where Nat is particularly remembered singing "Miss Otis Regrets".

When Molly & Ken moved to Farnborough, Pat & Tony Wing took over organising the Jazz nights and ran them for over twenty years, later moving the venue to Gosport Borough Football Club, then Thorngate Halls.

In about 2006 Terry Hinkley took over responsibility. However, in June 2012 Terry suffered health problems and a Committee comprised of members took over responsibility for running the Club, as is currently the situation."

I'm aware that the above is incorrect and would prefer that it says something like:

The origins of the club are in about 1978 when Molly & Ken Barton, landlords at the Park Hotel, Park Road, Gosport (now the Park Tavern), started Jazz nights with bands including Cuff Billett, Doug & Dory Whitfield, Monty Sunshine, Bob Jenkins, Teddy Layton, Chris Newman, with Nat Gonella giving guest appearances. The club gave Nat a new lease of life. He appeared regularly and featured on Radio Victory with Cuff where Nat is particularly remembered singing "Miss Otis Regrets

When Molly & Ken moved to Farnborough in about 1981, Pat & Tony Wing took over organising the Jazz nights and began calling it Gosport Jazz Club for the first time. This started at Kelly's Hotel for a short time, then moved to Gosport Borough Football Club and then to the Thorngate Halls. Tony and Pat ran the Club for about 26 years and we must be grateful to them for the continuation of Trad Jazz in Gosport.

In 2006 Terry Hinkley took over responsibility and in January 2011 the Club moved to its present Venue of Gosport & Fareham Rugby Club. However, in June 2012 Terry suffered health problems and a Committee, comprised of members, took over responsibility for running the Club, as is currently the situation. Tony Wing and Terry Hinkley are Honorary Presidents of the Club.

Long before that, Club member Maurice Kemp remembers jazz record recitals being held at Privett School which preceded the founding by Vic Brown and others of the Downbeat Club which ran weekly, live, mainly Trad Jazz events, from 1957 to the mid 1960s. There was no active Jazz-based organisation in Gosport from the mid-1960s to 1981. Further information about the activities of the Downbeat Club is given by following this link.

Pat: I would be grateful if you and Tony could fill in the correct information where I've requested it above.

If you could also describe any highlights [a few special gigs and performers] during your time that would be very much appreciated.

Malcolm

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Cuff Billett [to Chris]:

Delving back in the brain remnants my first contact was the late 50's when the Vieux Carre band used to play at Bury House (Thorngate Hall), in fact somewhere I've got photos of the bands last job before I left to join the Kid Martyn band - that would be 1960. Vic Brown used to book the band. A club used to run in the RAFA club around 1958, I remember seeing the Tijuana Band playing there Jimmy Frost, Don Gordon, Johnny White, et.al.

I mentioned to Joy [Cox] the last time we were down at the club about The Park, Alverstoke, with Ken the landlord and his wife Molly - they moved to a smallish pub in Farnham and we used to visit them occasionally before a gig at Farnham JC. At the Park we did a broadcast for Radio Victory. I think it was Nat's 70th - a pick-up band with ex-Georgia JB members Teddy Layton and Alan Duddington and Bobby Mickleburgh, John Bell, Ray Ember and me. I still have a recording of it.

I suppose someone may have the dates of the moves, Bury House to Park hotel back to Bury House (as Thorngate) then Gosport football club then the Rugby club. I will try to locate any photos I have and send them as attachments.

Maurice Kemp [to Vicky]:

Following our conversations on early Jazz in Gosport, here are a few facts as I remember them and further research carried out recently.

Downbeat Club. 1957 to Mid Sixties.

Chairman : Vic Brown.

President : Johnny Dankworth.

Signature Tune : Take the A Train.

Part of the Portsmouth Area Jazz Federation.

Initially Club held jazz record recitals at Privett School before moving to rooms at the Thorngate Halls.

Live bands were gradually introduced both Traditional and Modern using local groups and occasional big names , on roughly every two weeks Big names I remember were Kenny Ball , Terry Lightfoot , Bob Wallis ,and the entire Jonny Dankworth Orchestra in 1962 .

Modernists I remember were Joe Harriott and Bert Courtley with Ginger Baker (Cream) on drums .

On day jazz festivals were held at Easter with local and visiting Jazz musicians between the years 1960 -3 .

By 1963 however the music scene was changing with the arrival of the Fab Four . This can be seen at 1963 Jazz Festival where there was the Mike Cotton Sound (Trad) along with the Classics a local pop group .

By 1964.

\*\* I believe Doug and Dory Whitfield were involved at this time and maybe Cuff Billet as well.\*\* (added by Vicky)

## **The DOWNBEAT CLUB and Jazz in Gosport - 1950s to mid-1960s**

The earliest recollection we have of Jazz in Gosport comes from long-standing Gosport Jazz Club member, Maurice Kemp, who remembers jazz record recitals at Privett School before the scene moved to Gosport Community Association Bury House, (before the Thorngate Halls were built by the Association, opening in 1960). He also recalls the Downbeat Club started in 1957 by Vic Brown and a few others.

Maurice says that "Live bands were gradually introduced both Traditional and Modern using local groups and occasional big names, on roughly every two weeks. Big names I remember were Kenny Ball , Terry Lightfoot, Bob Wallis, and the entire Jonny Dankworth Orchestra in 1962. Modernists he remembers were Joe Harriott and Bert Courtney with Ginger Baker (Cream) on drums.

One day jazz festivals were held at Easter with local and visiting Jazz musicians between the years 1960 to 1963. By then, however, the music scene was changing with the arrival of the Fab Four, jazz was no longer as popular, but I believe it carried on for awhile with local Groups."

Following from this we managed to contact Vic Brown who now (December 2016) lives at Waterlooville and who confirms being part of founding the Downbeat Club in 1957 at Bury House with colleagues, Vic being Chairman. It rapidly expanded as a trad. jazz club and they once had an attendance of 300, taking over the whole of the ground floor of the House and even held a Jazz Band Ball at Lee Tower. They had a 'modern' night once a month (that featured the likes of Tubby Hayes on tenor sax, Vic Ash on clarinet and Bill Le Sage on vibes and Ginger Baker, Eric Clapton and Jack Bruce as 'Cream').

Trad. names included Alex Walsh, Gerry Brown, Monty Sunshine, Mick Mulligan with George Melly and Chis Barber and Otilie Paterson with the Clyde Valley Stompers. The Club also used local trad. bands including Vieux Carre and Summa Cum Laude whilst the local 'moderns' included the blind pianist Bill Cole and his quartet.

Vic says that the average attendance was 250 to 300 in the Thorngate Theatre but on Maundy Thursday in 1961 Kenny Ball appeared and the Club held that in the Thorngate Ballroom and squeezed in just over one thousand! The Band cost £45 and admission was two shillings [10p] and it was a good night all round!

A remarkable feature of the Downbeat Club was that it was 'dry', and the local hostelrys of the Harvest Home and Wiltshire Lamb did a roaring trade on Thursday evenings. Vic says that the only time they had a bar was for the visit of Johnny Dankworth with the band in the ballroom and the bar in the theatre.

The transition came with more modern 'popular' music and there were appearances by Georgie Fame, Long John Baldry, Lulu, The Hollies, Rod Stewart (three times), Eric Clapton and Manfred Mann, etc. Vic says that the Club gradually wound down in the mid-1960s.